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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

MELVILLE AND HAWTHORNE COMPARED AND CONTRASTED

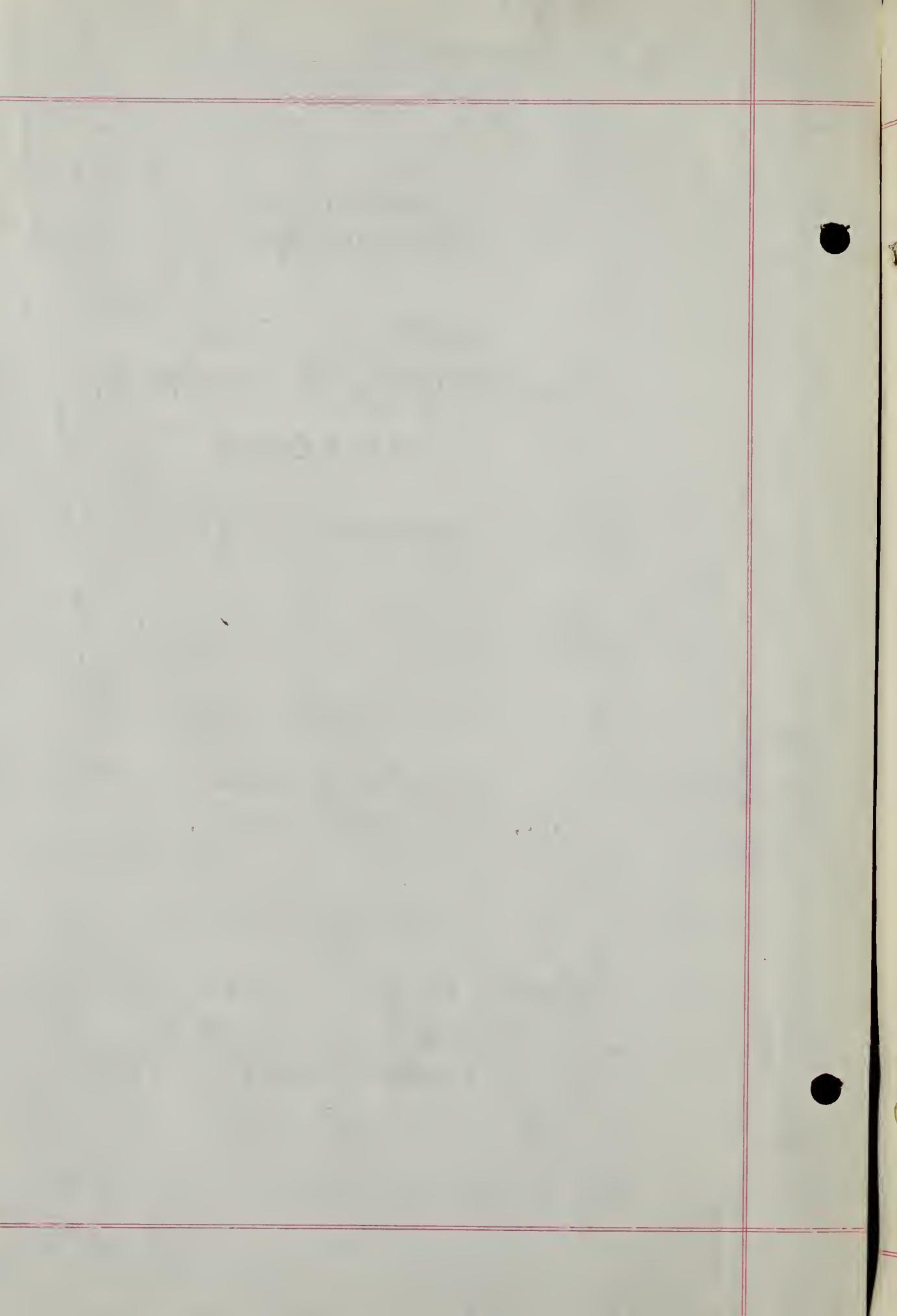
by

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(A.B., Eastern Nazarene College, 1938)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
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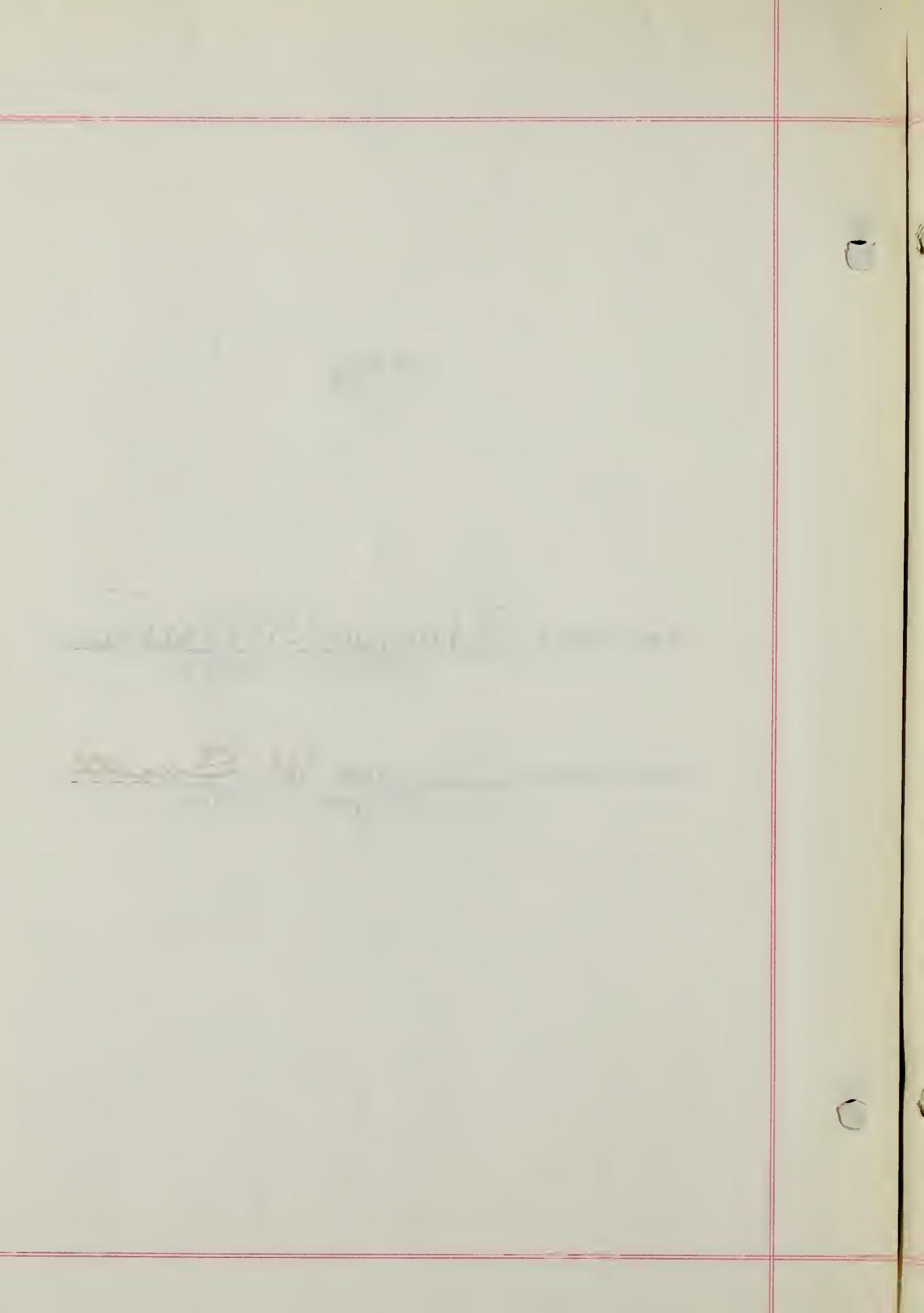


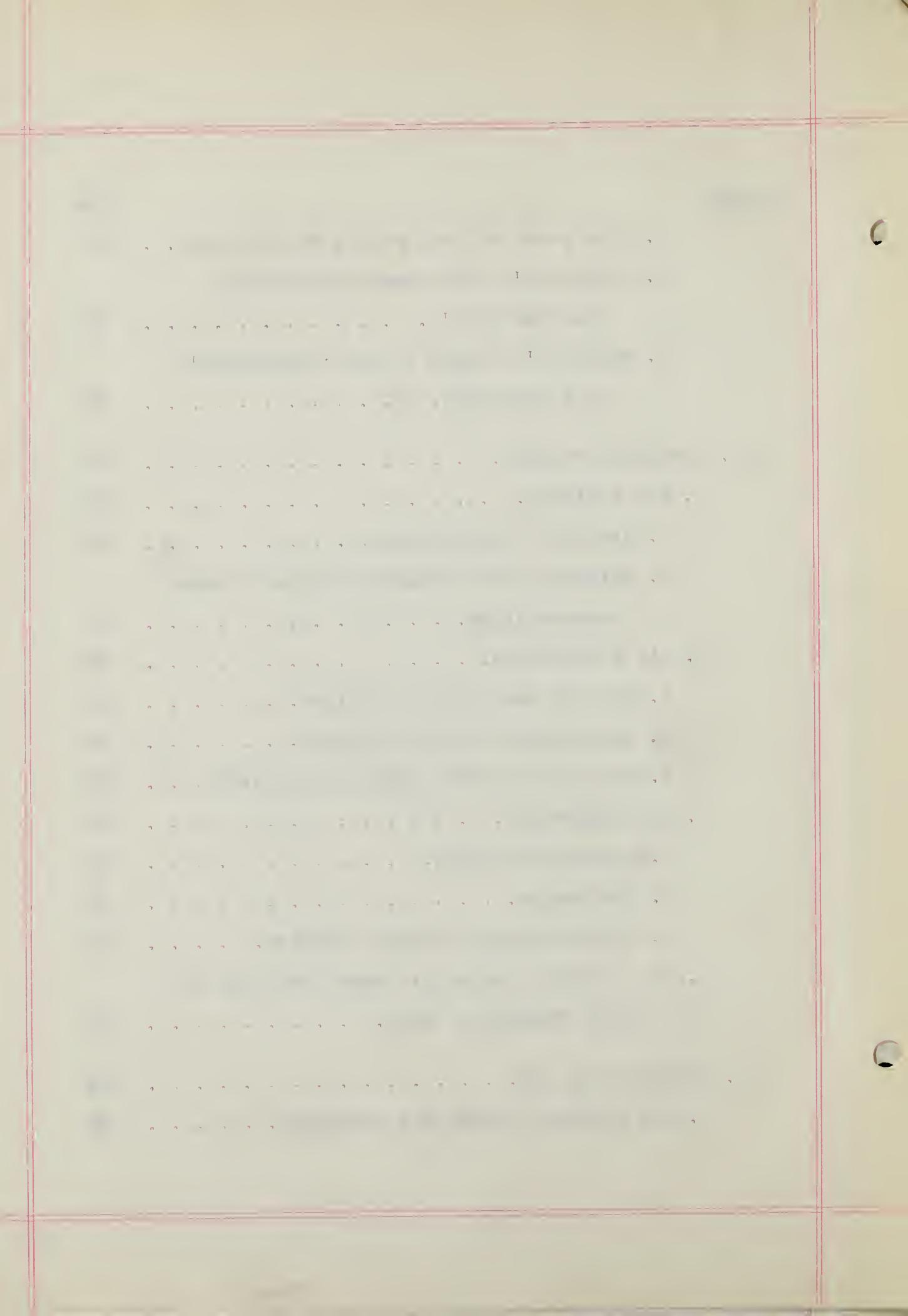
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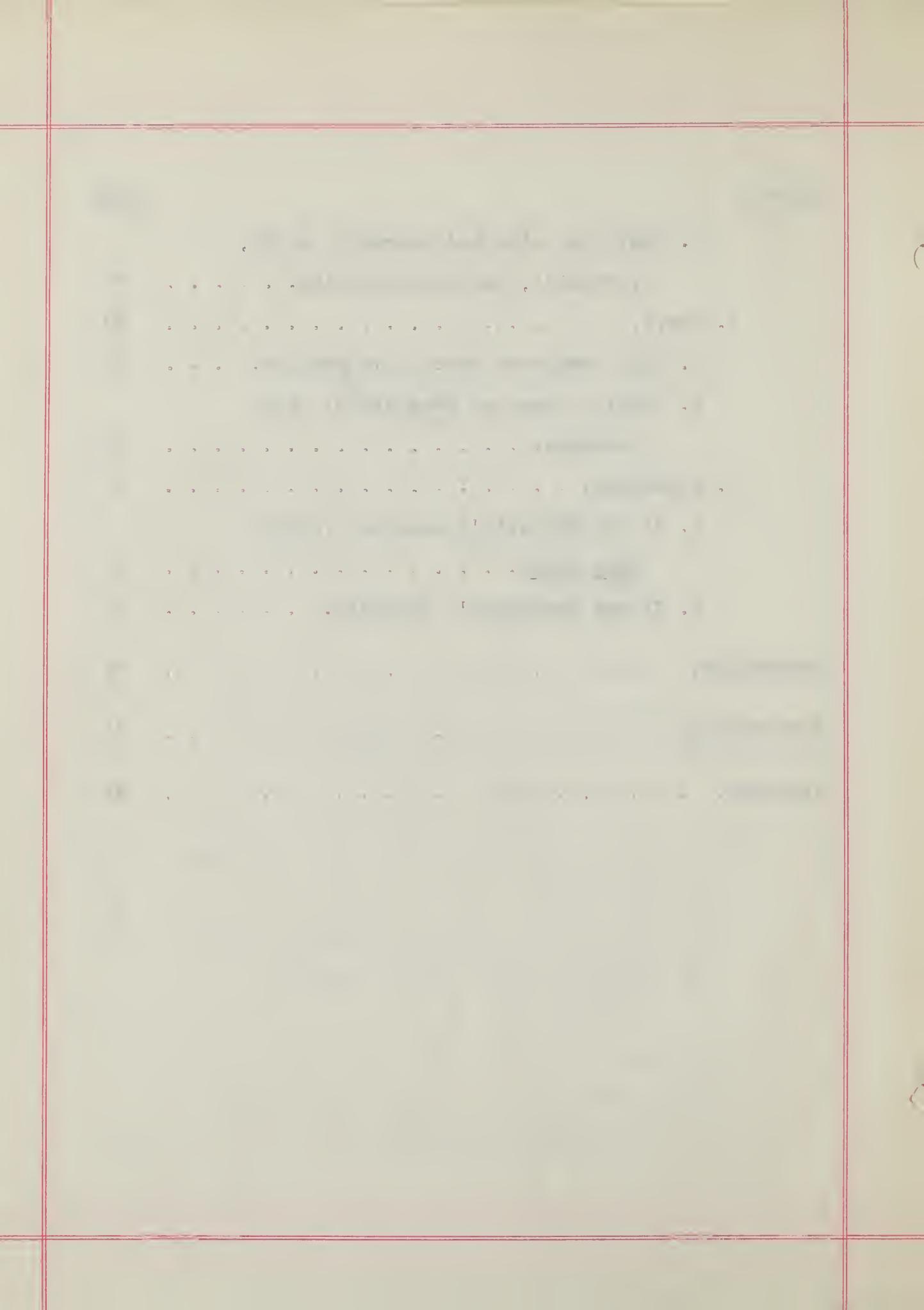
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the first time I have seen a specimen of this species. It is a small bird, about 10 cm. long, with a slender body, long wings, and a long tail. The plumage is dark brown above, with some lighter spots on the wings and tail. The underparts are white, with some dark streaks on the breast and belly. The bill is long and thin, slightly curved at the tip. The legs are long and thin, with long toes. The feet are webbed. The voice is a sharp, high-pitched chirp.

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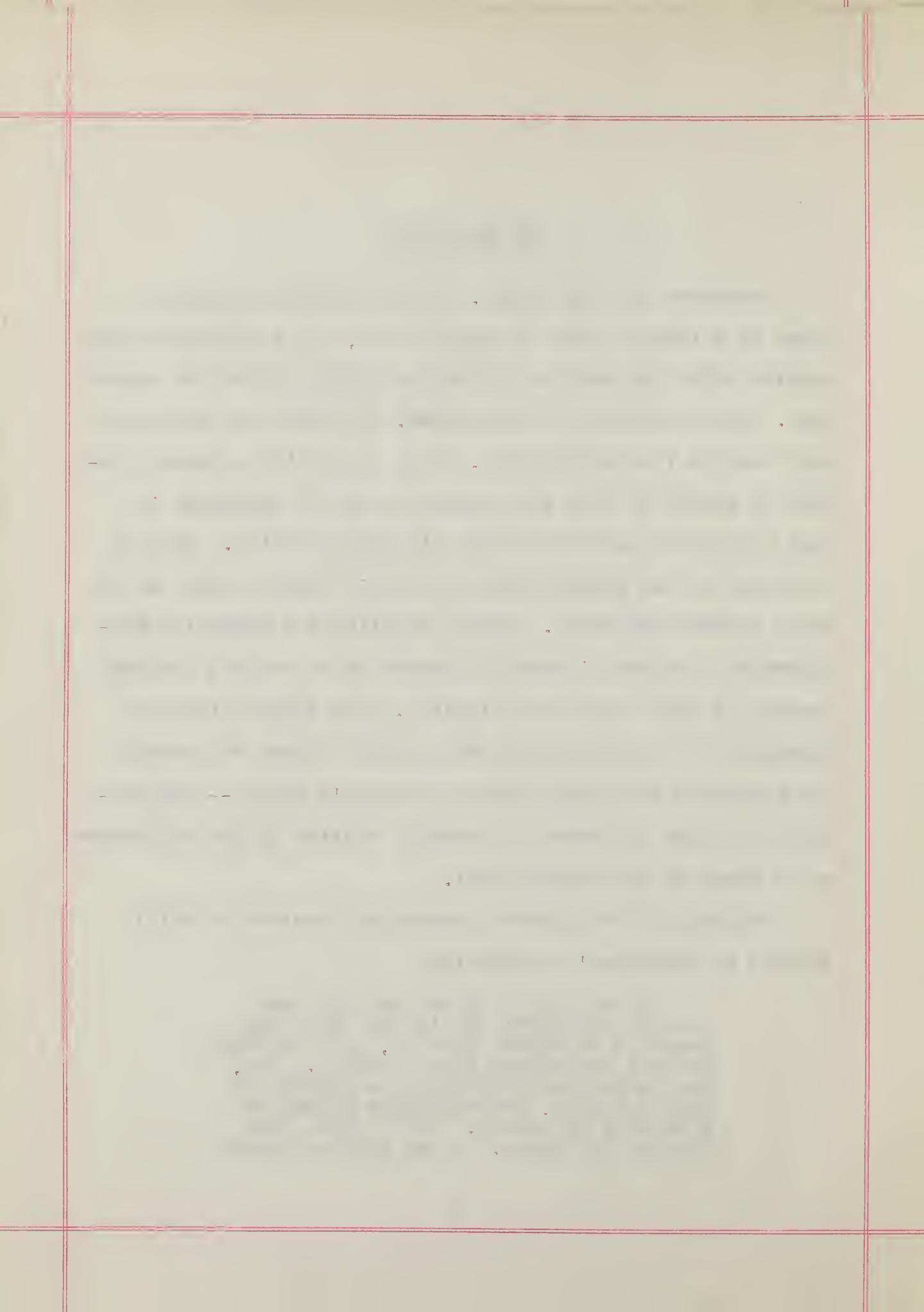


INTRODUCTION

Paradoxes are intriguing. They inevitably challenge those of a logical mind to explain them, but tenaciously they persist after the smoke of attempted conflagration has passed away. They continue to defy reason. Melville and Hawthorne each rose to literary heights. They began with a common promise to ascend to high but opposing peaks of greatness in their attempted solution of the big "why" of life. This is reflected in the subject matter of their books as well as in their methods and style. Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne on a surface inspection appear to be men who contrast greatly in their likes and dislikes. The former with his knowledge of a world outside that of the bounds of America was certainly far removed from Hawthorne's world -- New England and parts of Europe so commonly visited by New Englanders as to savor of the conventional.

Called by this apparent paradox and spurred on still further by Hawthorne's invitation

I am glad to think that God sees through my heart; and if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy, and therefore worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there. I can neither guide



nor enlighten him . . . I sympathize with them, not they with me.¹

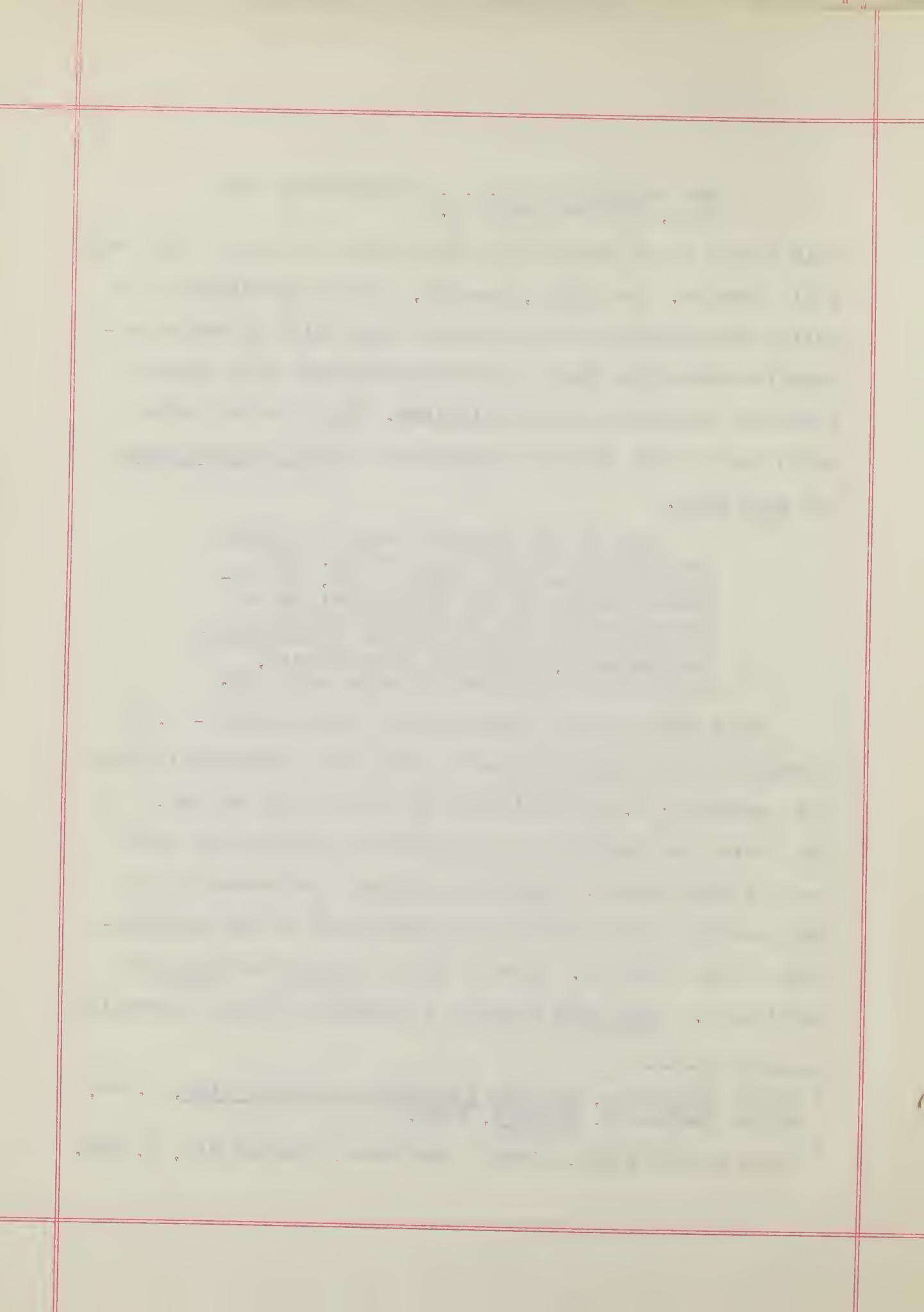
this thesis is an attempt to explain away a paradox which will still persist. The study, however, will be profitable in a better understanding of two men who were alike in their purpose to expose the shams of civilization but tried vastly different methods in their solutions. Henry Seidel Canby aptly points this out in a comparison of The Scarlet Letter and Moby Dick.

Two of the greatest books of ethical imagination in the last century, "The Scarlet Letter" and "Moby Dick", are intimate proofs of the dissimilarities of genius working in the same spiritual atmosphere but with different intellectual environments, different temperaments, different conceptions of means and ends.²

The sources of this thesis are of two natures - 1. biographical and autobiographical (the latter includes letters and journals); 2. the fictional writing of the two men. In the latter the question as to how much autobiography there is in novels arises. Melville projects his personality so far into his novels that he sacrifices art to the promulgation of his theories. This is true of Mardi and Pierre in particular. Moby Dick contains a restraint of the personality

¹ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, p. 90, citing Hawthorne, Journal, 1843.

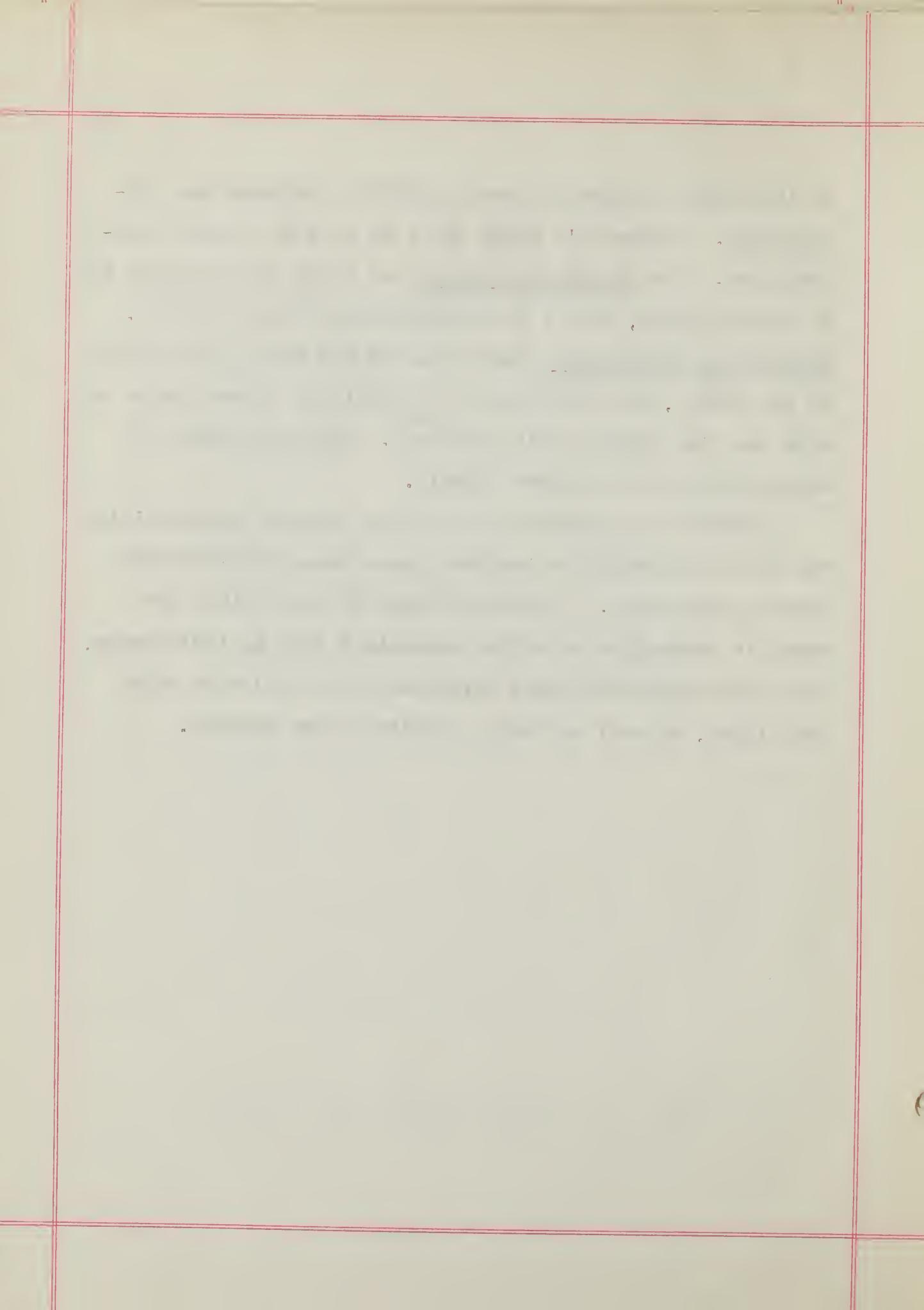
² Henry Seidel Canby, Classic Americans, Chapter Six, p. 250.



of its author so that the whole effect is balanced and proportional. Hawthorne's works admit of no such direct interpretation. The Blithedale Romance has popularly been held up as autobiography, but it is autobiographical only in part.

Mosses from an Old Manse does savor of the ideas and beliefs of its author, but even here it is difficult to know where to draw the line between fact and fancy. Reasonableness and conservatism have been the formula.

Melville and Hawthorne are two enigmatical personalities who each contributed an immortal masterpiece to nineteenth century literature. A parallel study of their lives and works is undertaken to better understand them as individuals, to better understand their relation to the period in which they lived, as well as their relation to one another.

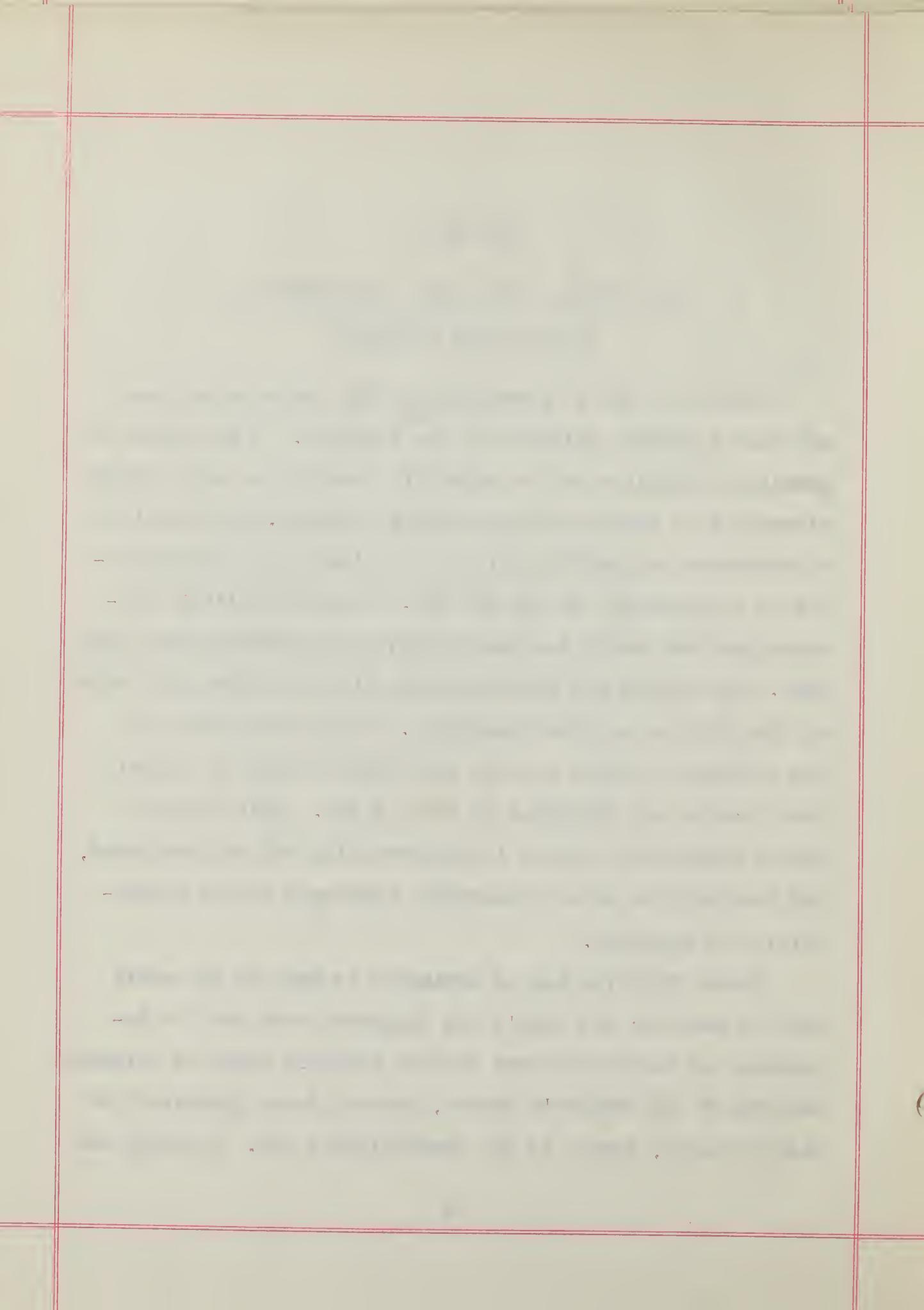


CHAPTER I

THE HERITAGE AND EARLY ENVIRONMENT OF MELVILLE AND HAWTHORNE

This is an age of investigating all the circumstances and then a careful weighing of the evidence. First causes or possible beginnings are as carefully examined as more obvious elements in a problem of personality analysis. The heritage of Hawthorne and Melville will be considered here as pertinent to a comparison of the two men. There are certain psychologists who would deny any influence of heritage upon later life. The reader may make any such allowances from this point of view that he may feel necessary. There were factors in the heritage of these two men which seem to help to explain later events and attitudes in their lives. Their value in purely scientific inquiry into personality may be questioned, but they help to make a reasonable synthesis of the personalities in question.

Herman Melville had no apologies to make to the world when he arrived; for hadn't his ancestors made such an impression of usefulness that another Melville would be welcomed hopefully? His mother's father, General Peter Gansevoort of Dutch lineage, fought in the Revolutionary War. So great was



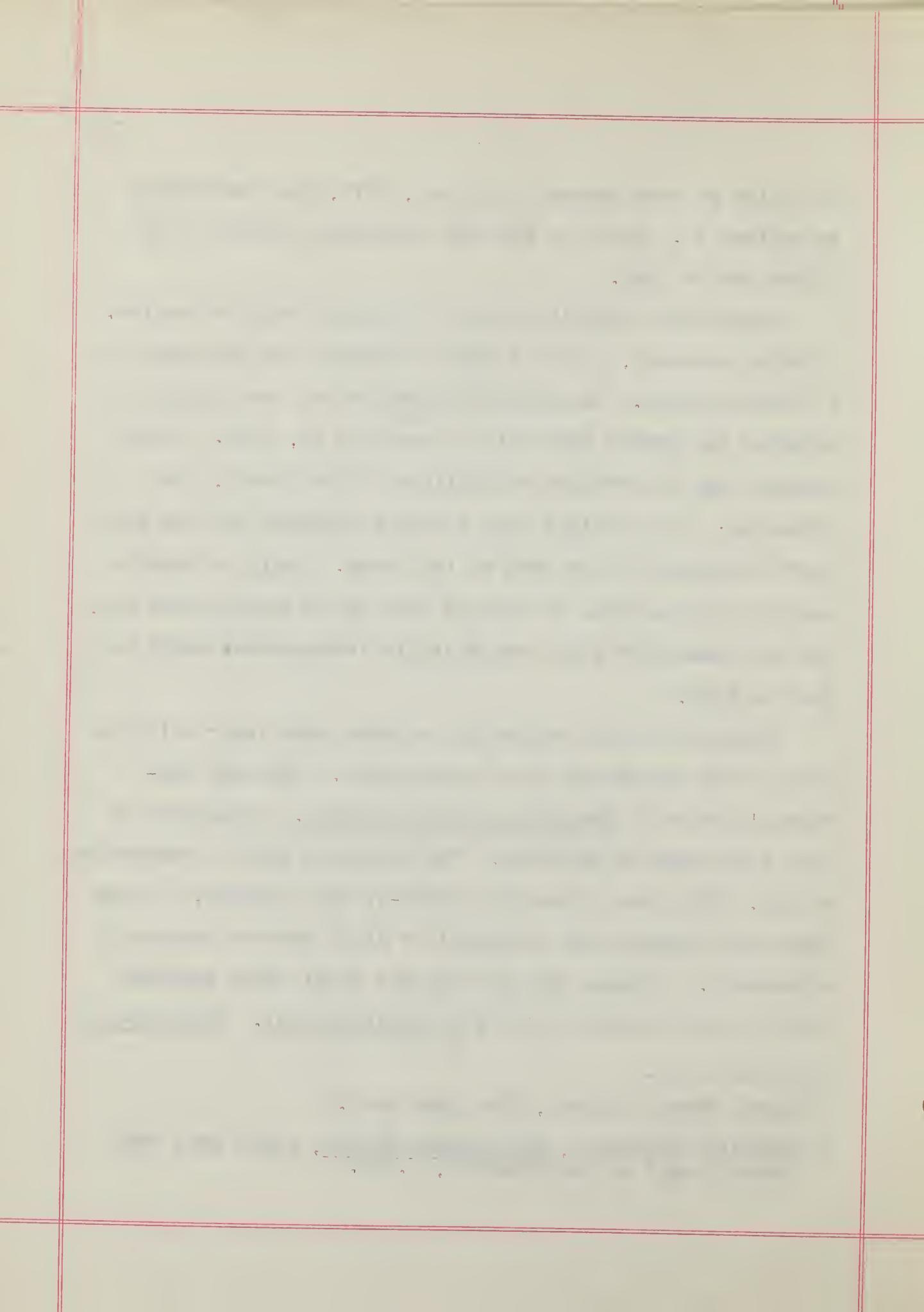
his valor at Fort Stanwix in August, 1777, that Washington recognized it. Later he was made brigadier general of the United States Army.

Grandfather Melville chose a different scene of action. A Boston merchant, he was vitally interested in what went on in Boston harbor. Records say he was one of the Indians who attended the Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773. In his younger days he attended the College of New Jersey, now Princeton; in his latter days he was epitomized as "The Last Leaf" by Holmes in his poem of that name. Early he began a useful life and lived on wearing "the old three-cornered hat, And the breeches"¹ with true Melville independence until he died in 1832.

The sins of the fathers are visited upon their children even to the second and third generations. This was Hawthorne's theme in The House of Seven Gables. Apparently he took some stock in heredity. The following was an examination of his. They were "stern and black-browed Puritans."² John Hawthorne examined and condemned to death persons accused of witchcraft. Perhaps this was why his great great grandson could so convincingly write The Scarlet Letter. The House of

¹ Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Last Leaf."

² Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, cited from "The Custom House" an introduction, p. 25.

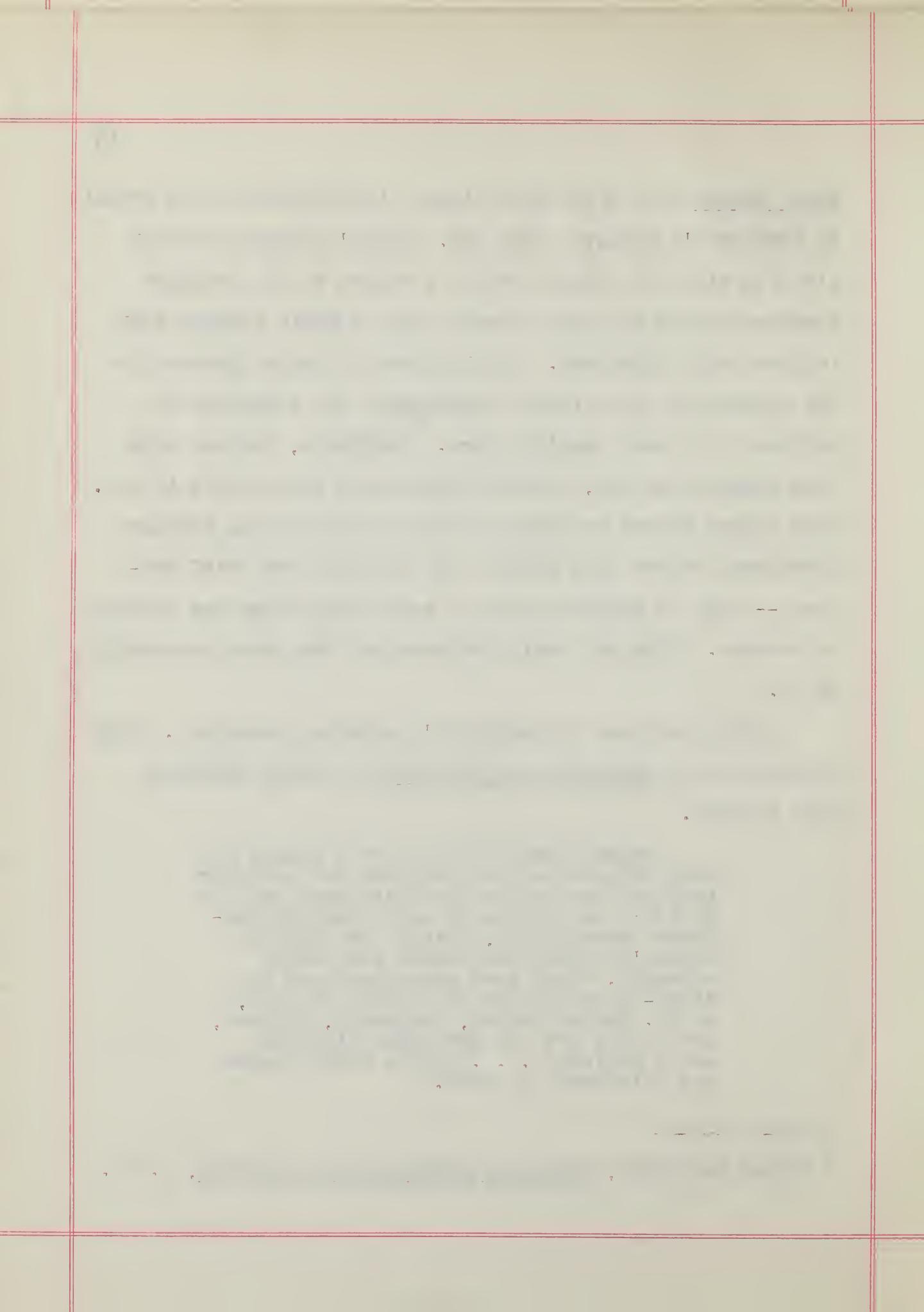


Seven Gables is a still more direct illustration of the affect of Hawthorne's ancestry upon him. Maule's curse "God will give him blood to drink" brought a shadow to the Pyncheon homestead which was not relieved until a Maule himself fell in love with a Pyncheon. The likeness of Judge Pyncheon to the Pyncheon in the picture illustrated the influence of heritage in a more tangible form. Hawthorne, playing with this theme as he did, revealed how much a part of him it was. This shadow seemed to hang over the family and the earlier Hawthornes turned from public life to their own chief concern -- that of manning ships to carry cargo from one country to another. This was their business and they were successful at it.

Little is known of Hawthorne's maternal ancestors. This quotation from Hawthorne and His Wife by Julian Hawthorne must suffice.

Madame Hawthorne came of a family who seem to have been as reserved and peculiar in their own way as the Hawthornes were in theirs; they possessed more than the Hawthorne sensibility, without sharing the latter's Puritan sternness and bodily strength. They were descendants of the stout-hearted widow of Richard Manning, of St. Petrox Parish, Dartmouth, England, who sailed for the New World with her seven children . . . in the ship "Hannah and Elizabeth" in 1679.³

³ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, p. 36.



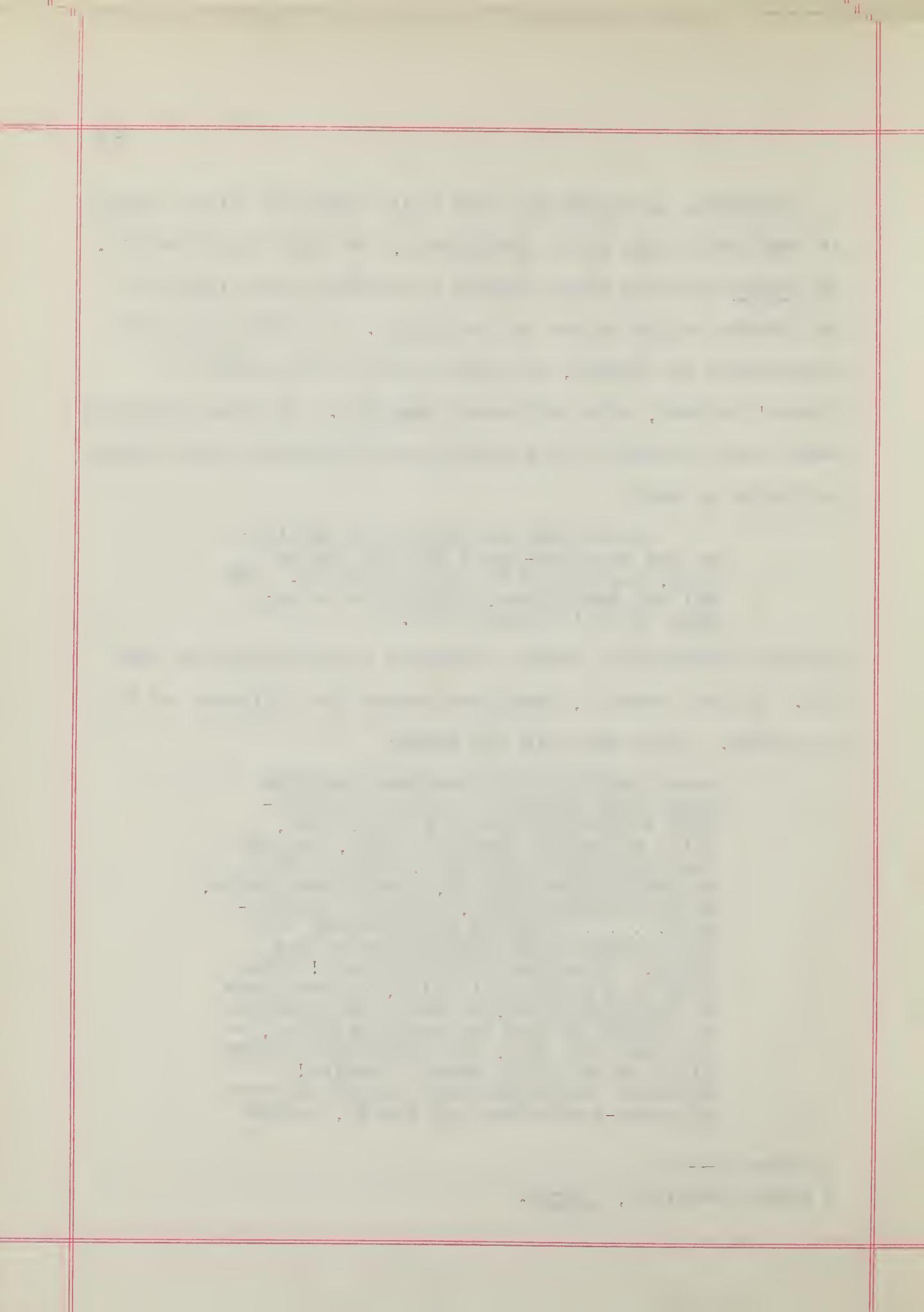
Melville and Hawthorne both could look back with a sense of just pride upon their progenitors, and this they both did. In Pierre Melville keeps showing the effect upon Pierre of the picture which he had of his father. The fort where his grandfather had fought, and which could be seen out of Pierre's window, also influenced his life. The later Melville would seem to scoff at any such idea as sophistry even though in Pierre he said

We are full of ghosts and spirits;
we are as grave-yards full of buried
dead, that start to life before us. And
all our dead sires, verily are in us;
that is their immortality.⁴

Melville admitted no direct influence of his ancestors upon him. On the contrary, Hawthorne sensed the influence of his ancestors. These were his own words:

these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins, that, after so long a lapse of years, the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. . . . "What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life, -- what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, -- may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" Such are the compliments bandied between my great-grandsires and myself, across

⁴ Herman Melville, Pierre.



the gulf of time! And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine.⁵

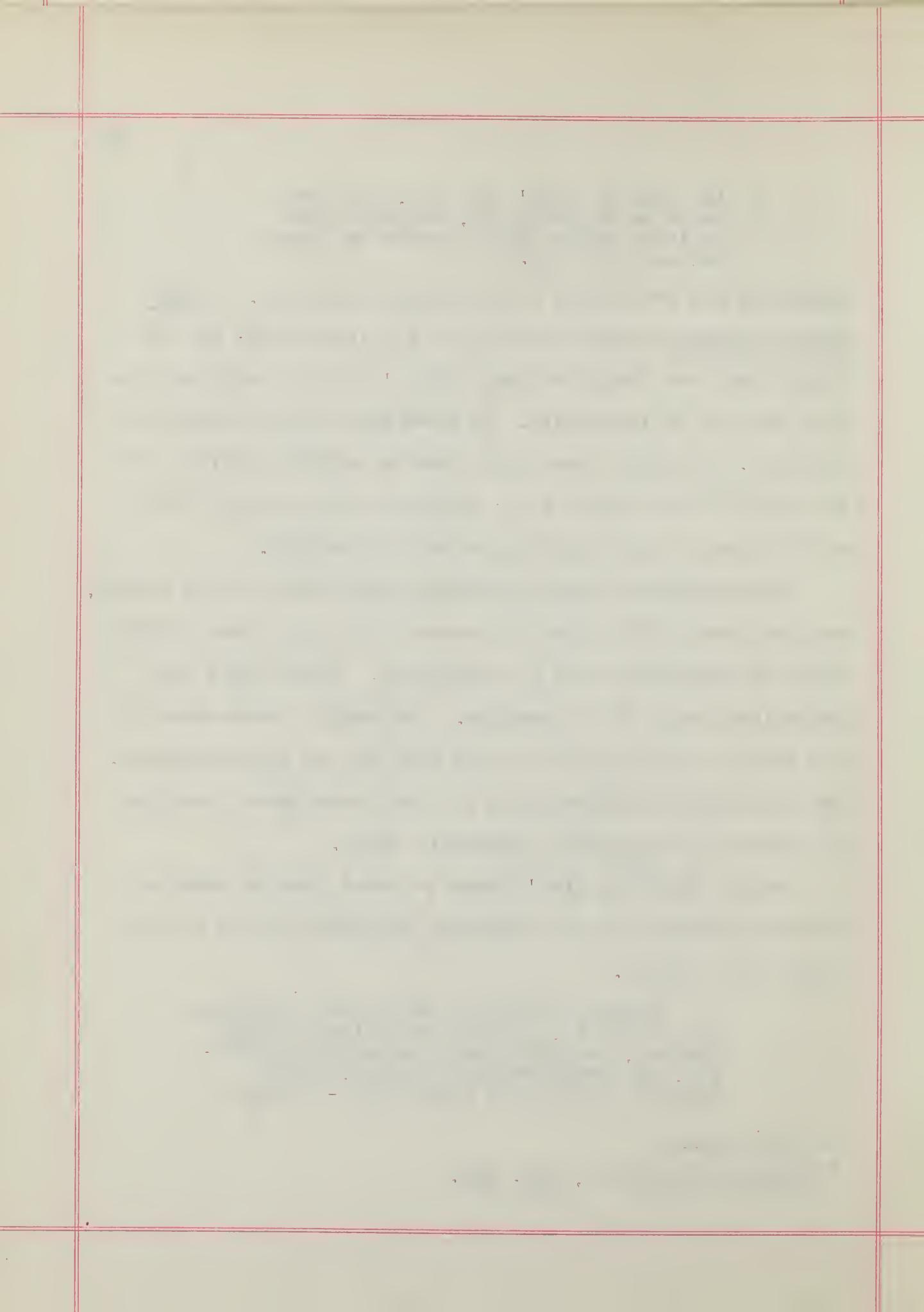
Hawthorne was ever aware of his Puritan heritage. In The Scarlet Letter he took the part of the iconoclast; but one feels that even though he rues Hester's public punishment he felt that it is inevitable. He knew that Puritans would be Puritans. Melville broke away from the characteristics of the fruit of his family tree; Hawthorne mirrored the fruit of his family tree in his books and in his life.

Such uncertain omens as family trees must be left behind, and the facts which directly concern the early lives of Melville and Hawthorne will be considered. Facts exist and oftentimes speak for themselves. Obviously a comparison of the facts concerning the two men bids for an interpretation. The conclusions gathered here are the facts pieced together to present an apparently reasonable whole.

Herman Melville didn't show any more promise than the average youngster in the following estimate written by his father in a letter.

Herman I think is making more progress than formerly, and without being a bright Scholar, he maintains a respectable standing, and would proceed farther, if he could be induced to study more -- being a

⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, loc. cit.



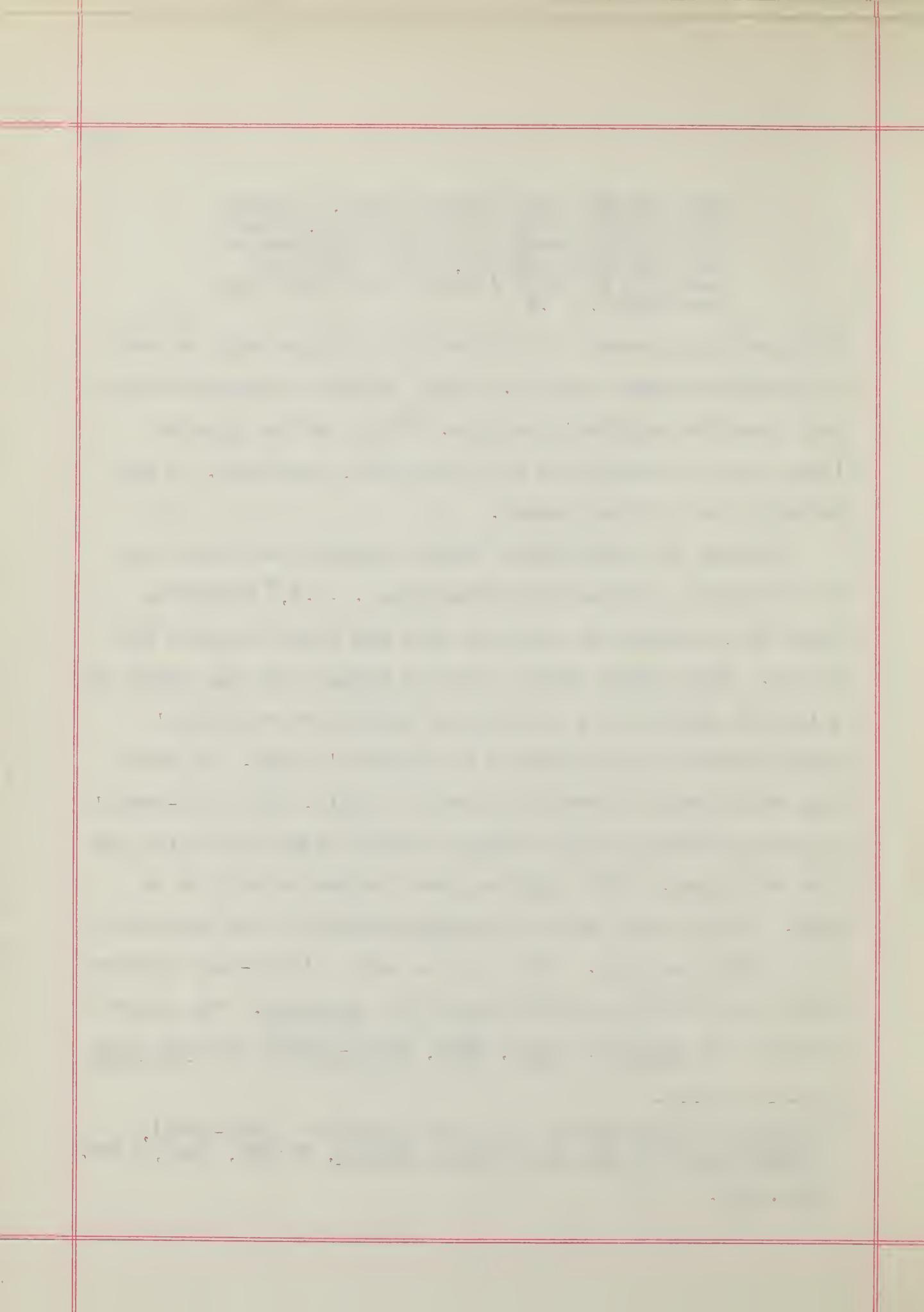
most amiable and innocent child, I cannot find it in my heart to coerce him, especially as he seems to have chosen Commerce as a favorite pursuit, whose practical activity can well dispense with much book knowledge . . .⁶

This quotation reveals an understanding father heart as well as a certain modest honesty. Allan Melville expected to look well into his children's welfare. Little did he plan to leave them -- a widow and eight children, penniless. A mad scramble for a living ensued.

Finally the same Herman "whose practical activity can well dispense with much book knowledge . . .",⁷ seventeen years old, severed his relation with his family and set out to sea. This action seemed a way of escape from the grind of a life of poverty to a boy who had wearied of relatives' solicitations and clerking in his brother's shop. He felt that there must be something better for him. The four-month's trip upon which he then embarked brought Herman back with his eyes wide open. Life could be cruel abroad as well as at home. After three years of teaching school he was again off to the alluring deep. This time he made a three-year sojourn among the South Sea Islands aboard the Acushnet. The source material for Redburn, Typee, Omoo, White-Jacket and Moby Dick

⁶ "Family Correspondence of Herman Melville" (1830-1904), Bulletin of The New York Public Library, 33:508, July, 1929.

⁷ Loc. cit.



was largely drawn from this adventure. Such a list of titles certainly warranted Melville's estimate of these years' experience.

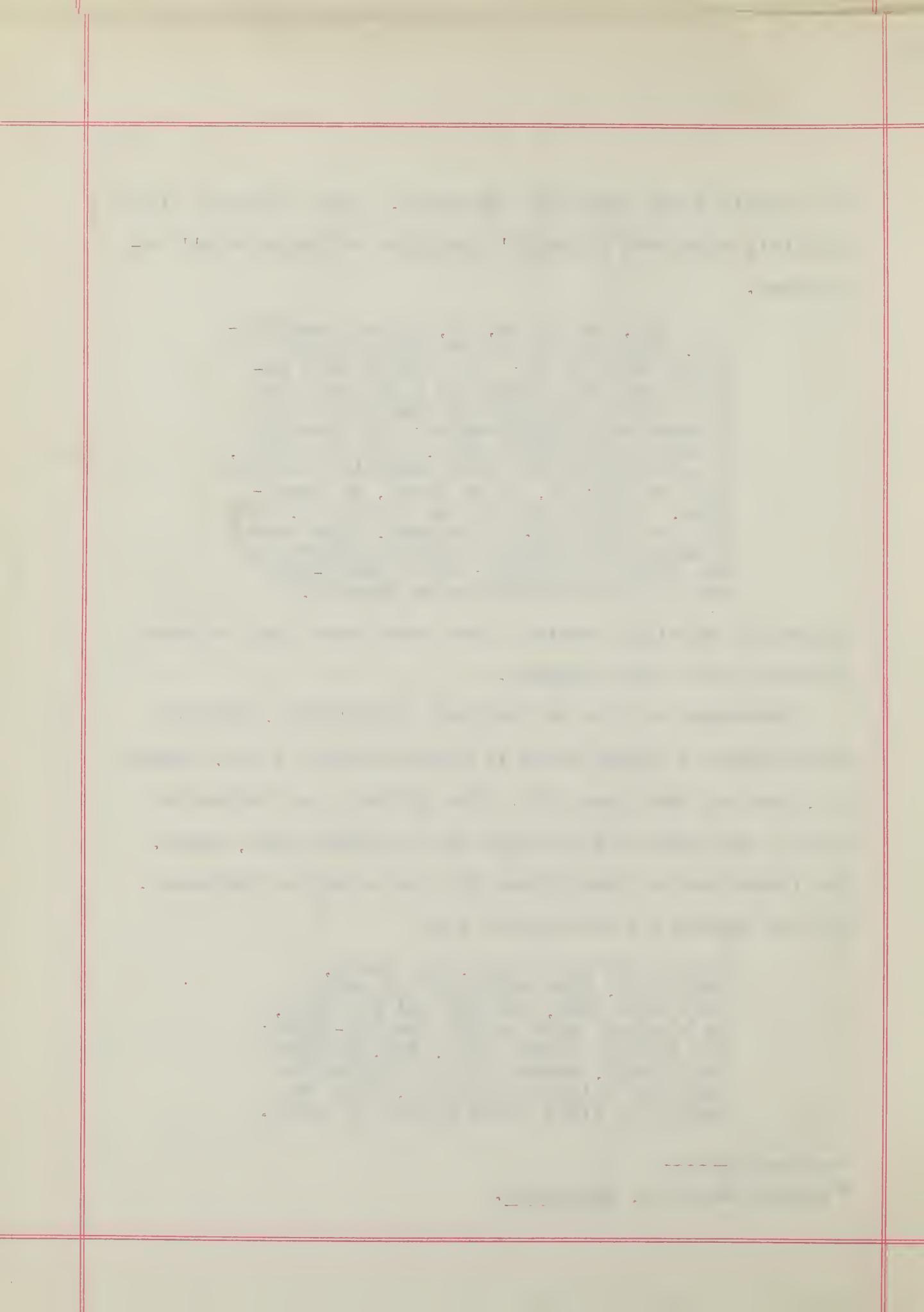
And, as for me, if, by any possibility, there be any as yet undiscovered prime thing in me; if I shall ever deserve any real repute in that small but high hushed world which I might not be unreasonably ambitious of; if hereafter I shall do anything that, upon the whole, a man might rather have done than to have left undone; if, at my death, my executors, or more properly my creditors, find any precious MSS. in my desk, then here I prospectively ascribe all the honour and the glory to whaling; for a whale-ship was my Yale College and my Harvard.⁸

Apparently Melville counted these years more than ordinary factors in his later success.

Hawthorne was not so fortunate as Melville, for his father died of yellow fever in Surinam when his son, Nathaniel, was but four years old. The widowed Mrs. Hawthorne lived a secluded life in Salem and at Sebago Lake, Maine. The latter was an ideal place for the sensitive Hawthorne. His own account of this period was

here I ran quite wild, and would, I doubt not, have willingly run wild till this time, fishing all day long, or shooting with an old fowling-piece; but reading a good deal, too, on the rainy days, especially in Shakespeare and "The Pilgrims Progress," and any poetry or light books within my reach.

⁸ Herman Melville, Moby Dick.



Those were delightful days; for that part of the country was wild then, with only scattered clearings, and nine tenths of it primeval woods.⁹

His attitude toward formal study was no more laudable than that of Melville.

But by and by my good mother began to think it was necessary for her boy to do something else; so I was sent back to Salem, where a private instructor fitted me for college. I was educated (as the phrase is) at Bowdoin College. I was an idle student negligent of college rules and the Procrustean details of academic life, rather choosing to nurse my own fancies than to dig into Greek roots and be numbered among the learned Thebans.¹⁰

Hawthorne's sister Elizabeth wrote in a letter to her nephew that

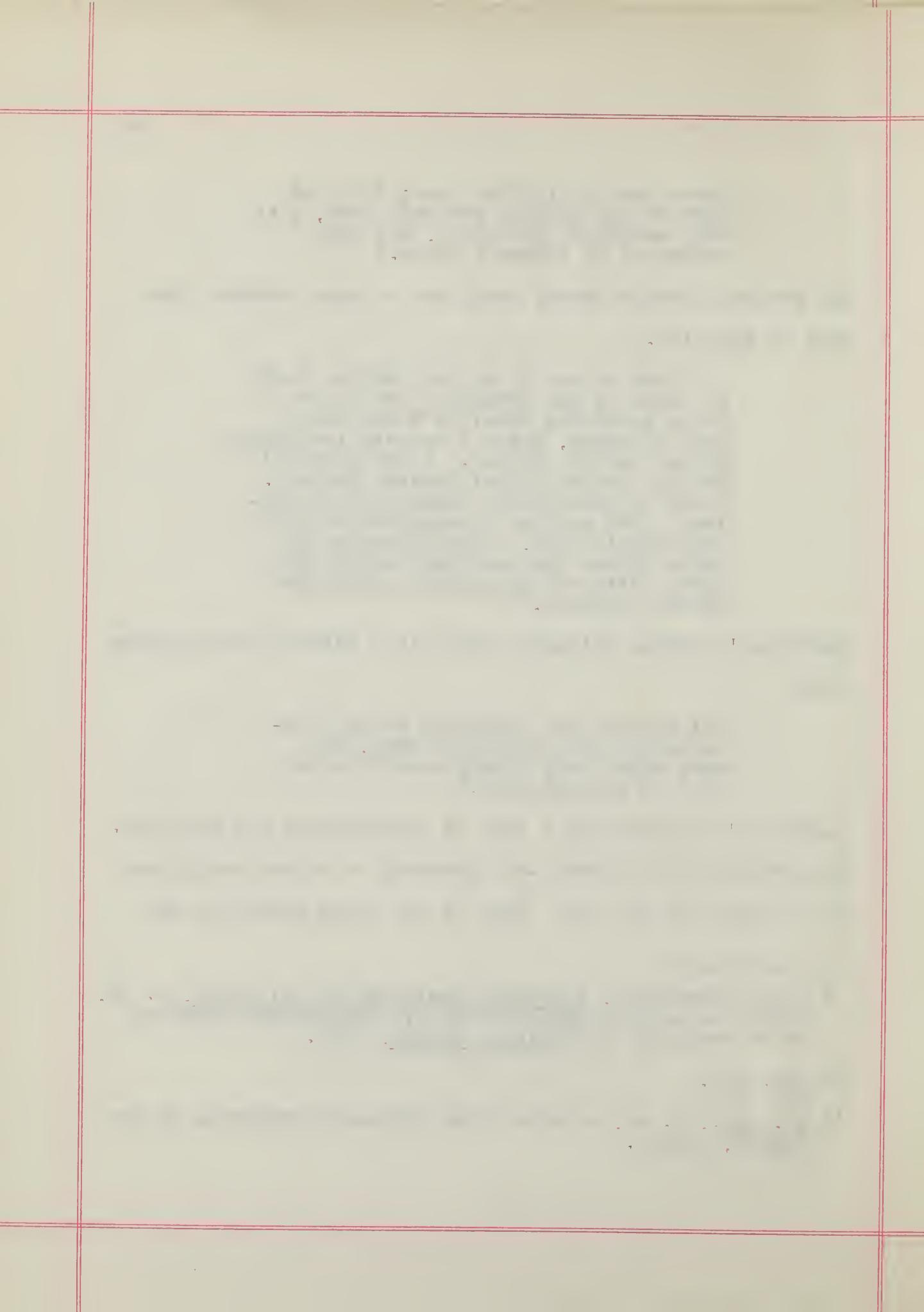
All through our childhood we were indulged in all convenient ways, and were under very little control except that of circumstance.¹¹

Hawthorne's boyhood was a time of peacefulness and solitude. His education was formal and classical -- a good background for a life with the pen. Life to the young Hawthorne was

⁹ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, p. 95, citing an autobiographical article written for Stoddard to be published in National Review, 1853.

¹⁰ Loc. cit.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 99, a letter from Elizabeth Hawthorne to her nephew, Julian.

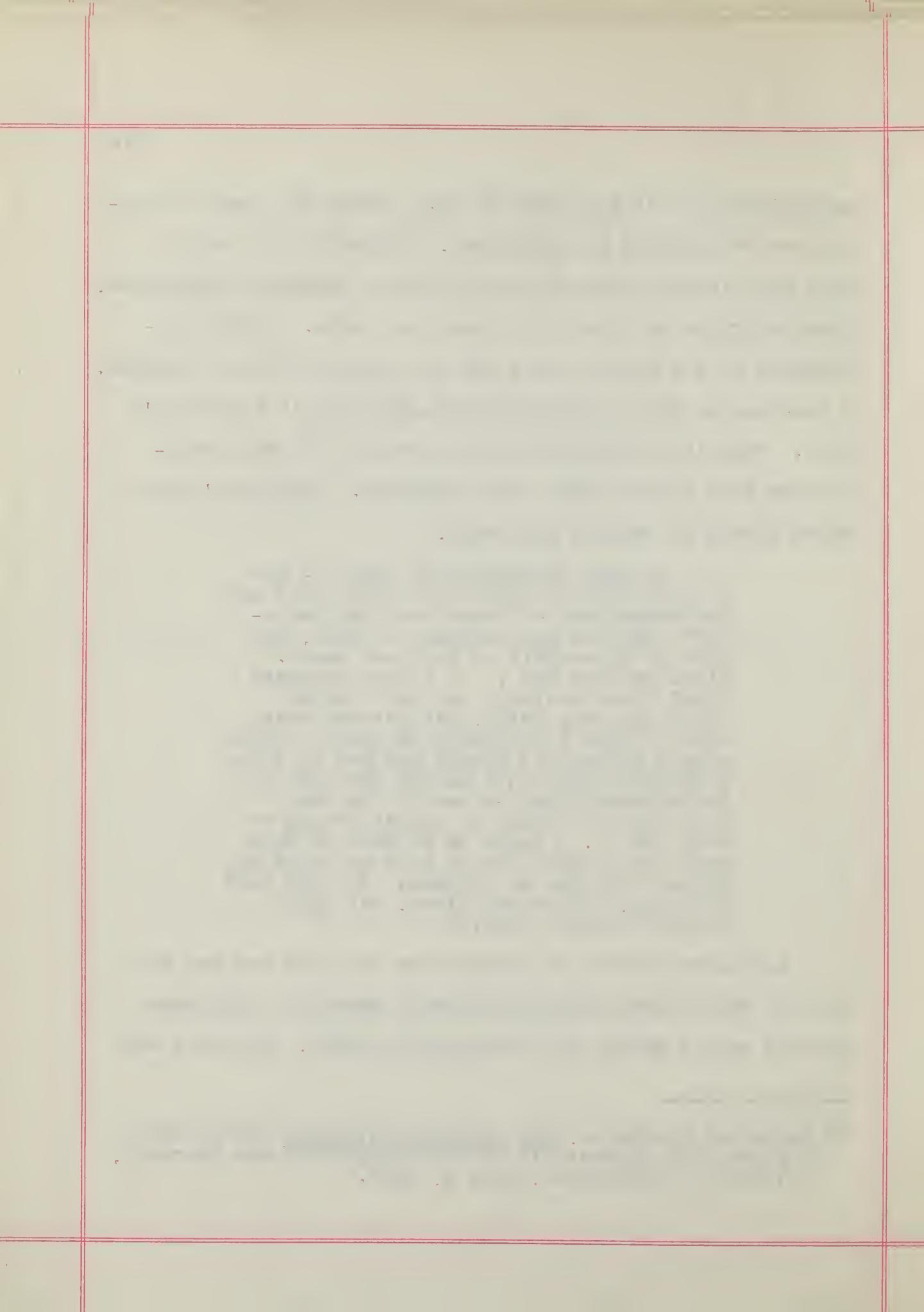


essentially one of the imagination. Action in a world of doing was not part of his existence. College to him was a time when lasting friendships with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Horatio Bridge and Franklin Pierce were made. Another achievement of his college days was the decision to be an author. A ten-year period of isolation then followed in Hawthorne's life. Many interpretations of his reasons for thus withdrawing from society have been proffered. Hawthorne's own words should be weighed carefully.

By some witchcraft or other -- for I really cannot assign any reasonable why and wherefore -- I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again. Since we last met . . . I have secluded myself from society; and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed what sort of life I was going to lead. I have made a captain of myself and put me into a dungeon; and now I cannot find the key to let myself out -- and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out . . . there is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. For the last ten years, I have not lived, but only dreamed about living.¹²

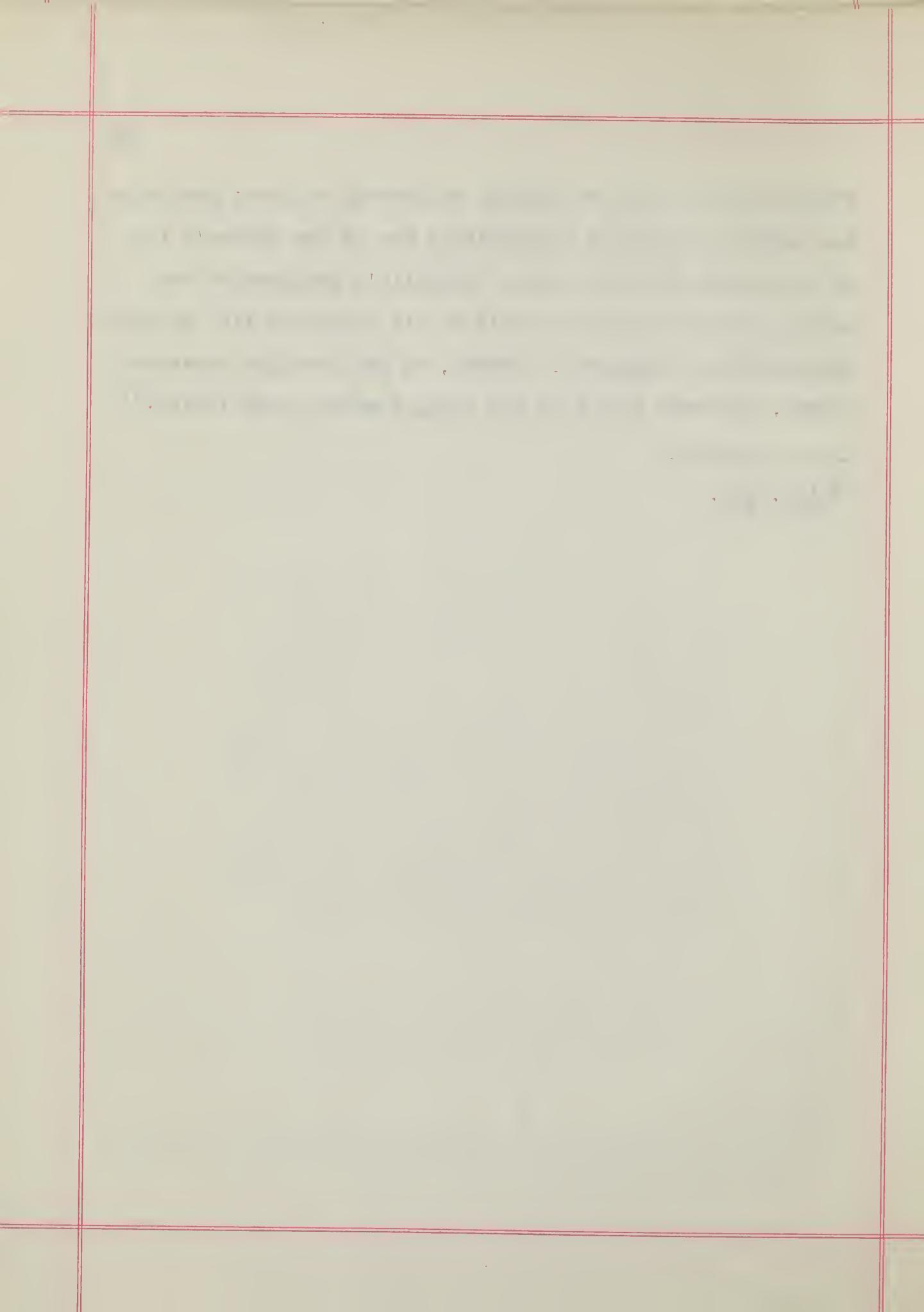
And so the period of preparation of these two men who were to write masterpieces contrasted sharply. Both were favored with a worthy and promising heritage. Melville was

¹² Nathaniel Hawthorne, The American Notebooks (Based upon the Original Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library), a letter to Longfellow, June 4, 1837.



forced out into life on account of poverty at home; Hawthorne was hedged in by quiet and solitude due to his mother's love of separation from the world. Melville's preparation for writing was contact with people of all kinds and life of many descriptions. Hawthorne, however, as the previous quotation showed, withdrew from life and "only dreamed about living."¹³

¹³ Loc. cit.



CHAPTER II

MARRIED AND FAMILY LIFE OF THE TWO MEN

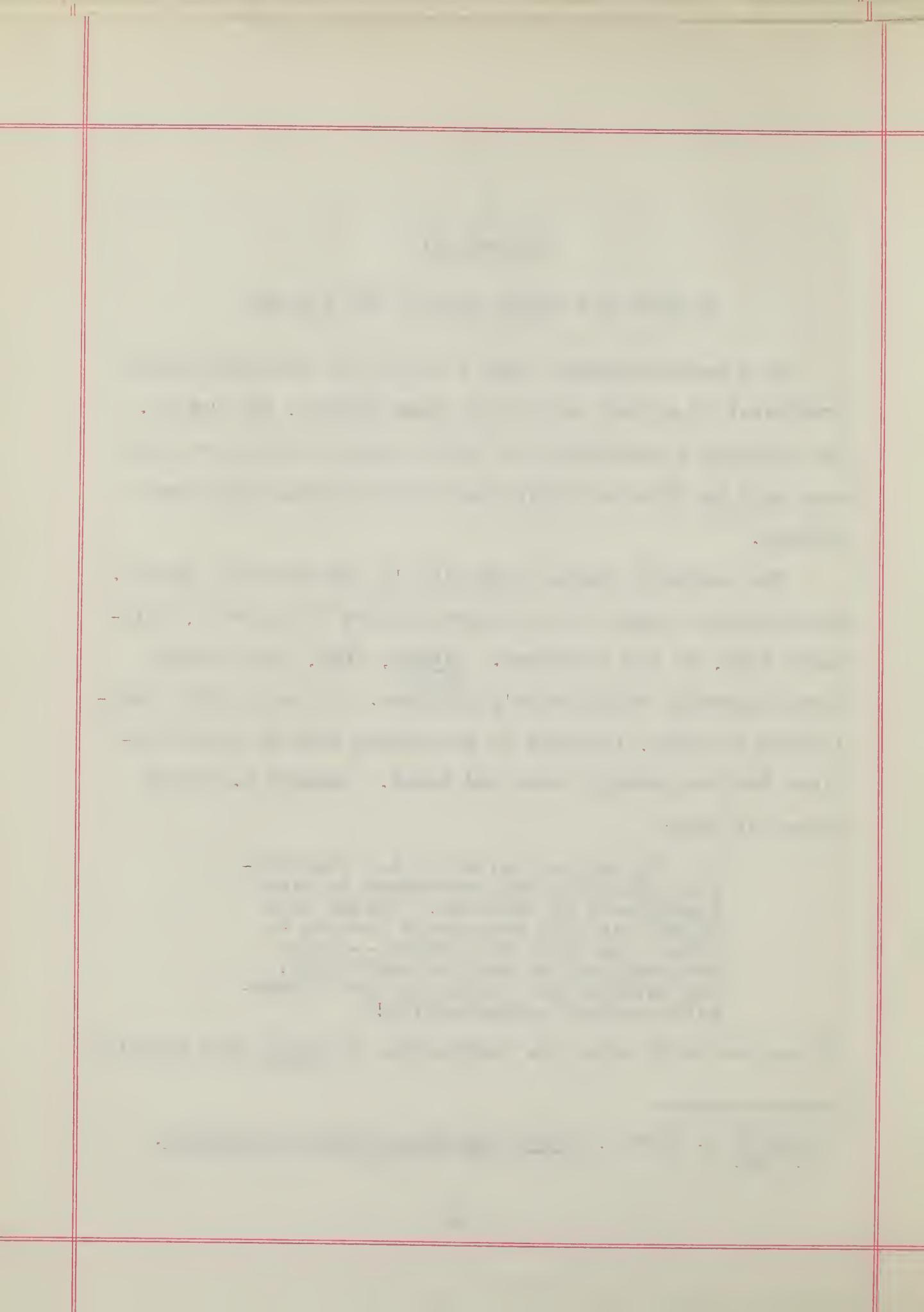
To a casual observer such a chapter as this might seem irrelevant in a study of men who were authors, but not so. The external circumstances of life brought pressure to bear upon both Melville and Hawthorne which affected their work greatly.

The available facts of Melville's courtship are meager. Most light was shed on it through letters of his wife, Elizabeth Shaw, to her relatives. Pierre, also, gave a less direct approach to Melville's attitude. He had a high idealization of woman, inspired by his mother whom he always admired but alternately loved and hated. Raymond M. Weaver worded it thus:

By the very ardor of his idealization, Melville was foredoomed to disappointment in marriage. Though both he and his wife were noble natures -- indeed for that very reason -- their marriage was for each a crucifixion. For between them there was deep personality without understanding!¹

It was not until after the publication of Typee that Melville

¹ Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville Mariner and Mystic, p. 340.



was financially able to marry. His whole life was filled with financial worry. At times it goaded him to ceaseless writing; again, it would plunge him into deepest despair. His acceptance of a position as Inspector of Customs in New York relieved the financial pressure during the last thirty years of his life. This is only one side of the picture of Melville's family life.

Elizabeth Shaw had no knowledge of the practical side of housekeeping, so it was necessary for Melville's mother and his three sisters to keep things going. This, doubtless, did not detract from Melville's distraction. "Lizzie" was doggedly devoted in spite of her lack of training. In a letter to her mother she gave a picture of her life which helped to characterize her.

"We breakfast at 8 o'clock, then Herman goes to walk and I fly up to put his room to rights, so that he can sit down to his desk immediately on his return. Then I bid him good-bye, with many charges to be an industrious boy and not upset the ink-stand and then flourish the duster, make the bed, etc., . . . after that I am ready to sit down to my work -- whatever it may be -- darning stockings -- making or mending for myself or Herman . . . but whatever I'm about I do not much more than get thoroughly engaged in it, than ding-dong goes the bell for luncheon. . . . Then Herman insists upon taking a walk of an hour's length at least. So unless I can have rain or snow for an excuse, I usually sally out and make a pedestrian tour a mile or two down Broadway . . .

and the other side of the body. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the heart is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the lungs are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the liver is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the kidneys are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the spleen is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the pancreas is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the gallbladder is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the intestines are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the rectum is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the bladder is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the prostate is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the testes are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the ovaries are located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the uterus is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the breasts are located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the heart is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the lungs are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the liver is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the kidneys are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the spleen is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the pancreas is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the gallbladder is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the intestines are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the rectum is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the bladder is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the prostate is located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the testes are located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the ovaries are located. The left side of the body is the side of the body where the uterus is located. The right side of the body is the side of the body where the breasts are located.

then I must make myself look as bewitchingly as possible to meet Herman at dinner. At four we dine, and after dinner is over, Herman and I come up to our room and enjoy a cosy chat. . . . Then he goes down town for a walk. . . . We all collect in the parlour in the evening, and generally one of us reads aloud for the benefit of the whole. Then we retire very early -- at 10 o'clock we all disperse.²

Melville's four children added much to Melville's financial strain. His attitude toward them was revealed in his letters and journals kept when he was in England separated from them. Baby Malcolm's first words "Where dat old man?" were spoken in his father's absence, and fondly entered in his journal and mentioned several times.³ At Coblenz he wrote

Opposite is this frowning fortress --
and some 4,000 miles away is America and
Lizzie. To-morrow I am homeward-bound!
Hurrah and three cheers!⁴

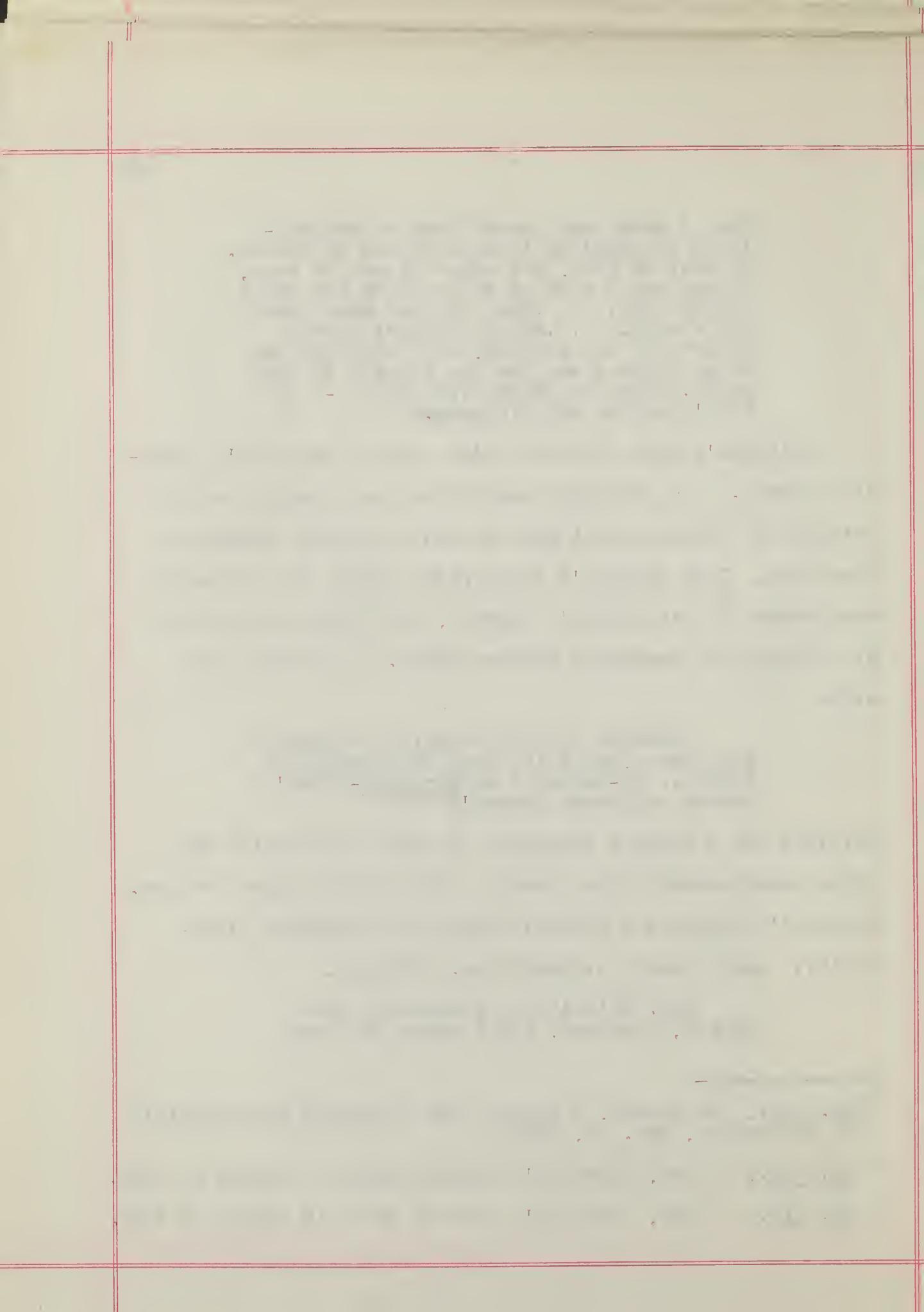
Melville had a natural affection for his family which was often overshadowed by his worry. If it had not been for Mrs. Melville's legacy her husband would have foundered financially. Again Weaver pictured Mrs. Melville.

Mrs. Melville is remembered as a gentle, gracious, loyal woman who bore

² Op. cit., pp. 265-66, a letter from Elizabeth Shaw Melville to her mother, Dec. 23, 1847.

³ Op. cit., p. 289, Melville's journal while in Europe in 1849.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 299, Melville's journal while in Europe in 1849.



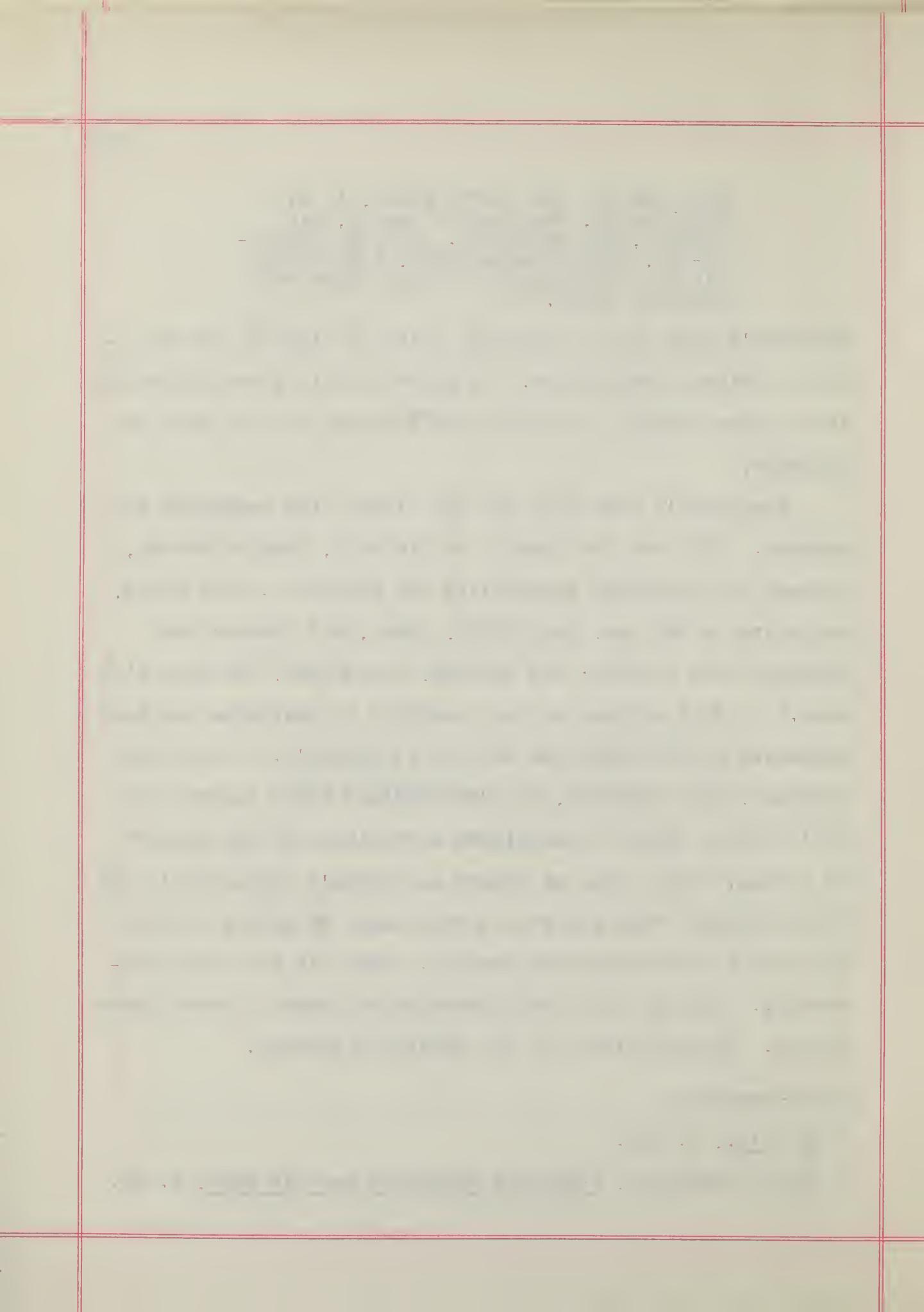
with him for over forty years, in his disillusion, his loss of health, his poverty, his obscurity. And his father-in-law, Chief Justice Shaw, befriended him with forbearance and with more substantial gifts.⁵

Melville's life from a practical point of view was one of almost continual frustration. In spite of this under the stress there shone through a devotion and fondness for his wife and children.

Hawthorne's home life was one filled with happiness and content. This was due largely to his wife, Sophia Peabody, a woman of remarkable personality and abilities. She could, according to her son, read Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; was familiar with history; and painted, sculptured, and drew with ease.⁶ A full account of the courtship of Hawthorne has been preserved in his letter as well as in Sophia's. It was his "Ownest", his "Dearest", his "Belovedest" which spurred him on to find a means of livelihood sufficient for the support of a home. For a time he worked as Custom's Inspector in the Custom House. This was such a slow means of saving that he invested in the Brook Farm venture. This did not prove successful. Idyllic were the letters which passed between these lovers. Characteristic is the following excerpt.

⁵ Op. cit., p. 340.

⁶ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, p. 40.



Belovedest, I sometimes wish that thou couldst be with (me) on board my salt-vessels and colliers; because there are many things of which thou mightst make such pretty descriptions; and, in future years, when thy husband is again busy at the loom of fiction, he would weave in these little pictures.⁷

Happier than his courtship if that were possible were the three years immediately following Hawthorne's marriage which he spent in Concord. He said

My life, at this time, is more like that of a boy, externally, than it has been since I was really a boy. It is usually supposed that the cares of life come with matrimony; but I seem to have cast off all care, and live on with as much easy trust in Providence as Adam could possibly have felt before he had learned that there was a world beyond Paradise.⁸

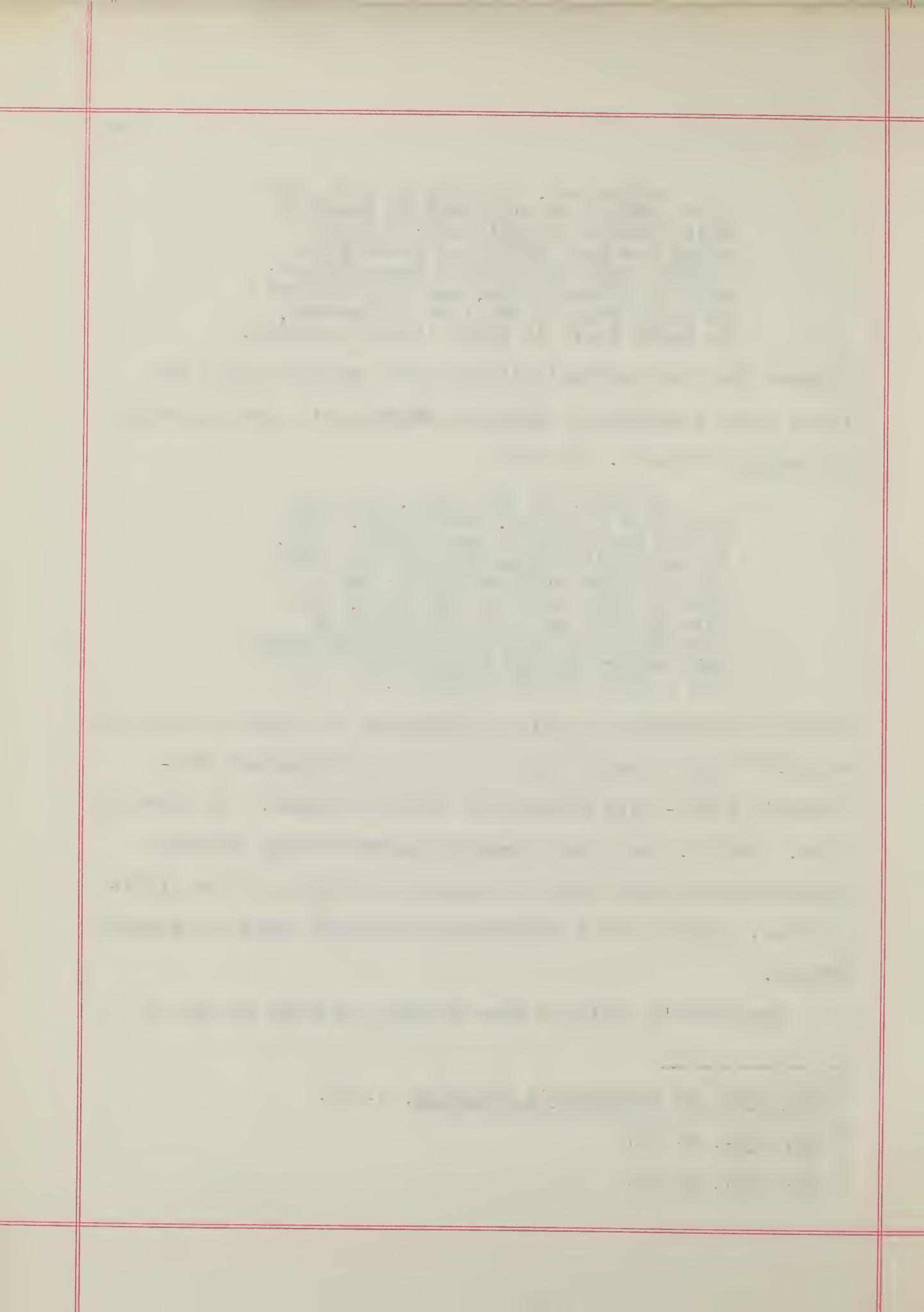
On another occasion he said "My business is merely to live and enjoy."⁹ This outward calm did not last throughout Hawthorne's life -- the stress and strain did come. In spite of this, however, there was a bond of understanding between Nathaniel and Sophia which lessened the effect of the difficulties. Sophia had a buoyancy which helped keep her husband afloat.

Hawthorne's children were vividly pictured by him in

⁷ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals, p. 63.

⁸ Op. cit., p. 95.

⁹ Op. cit., p. 96.



comments made in his journal. He noticed all their baby sayings and reactions. He noticed little Una's beauty which was the "most flitting, transitory, most uncertain and unaccountable affair, that ever had a real existence."¹⁰ In a similar vein he pondered at the children's bedtime.

Thus ends the day of these two children -- one of them four years old, the other some months less than two. But the days and the years melt away so rapidly that I hardly know whether they are still little children at their parents' knee, or already a maiden and a youth, a woman and a man.¹¹

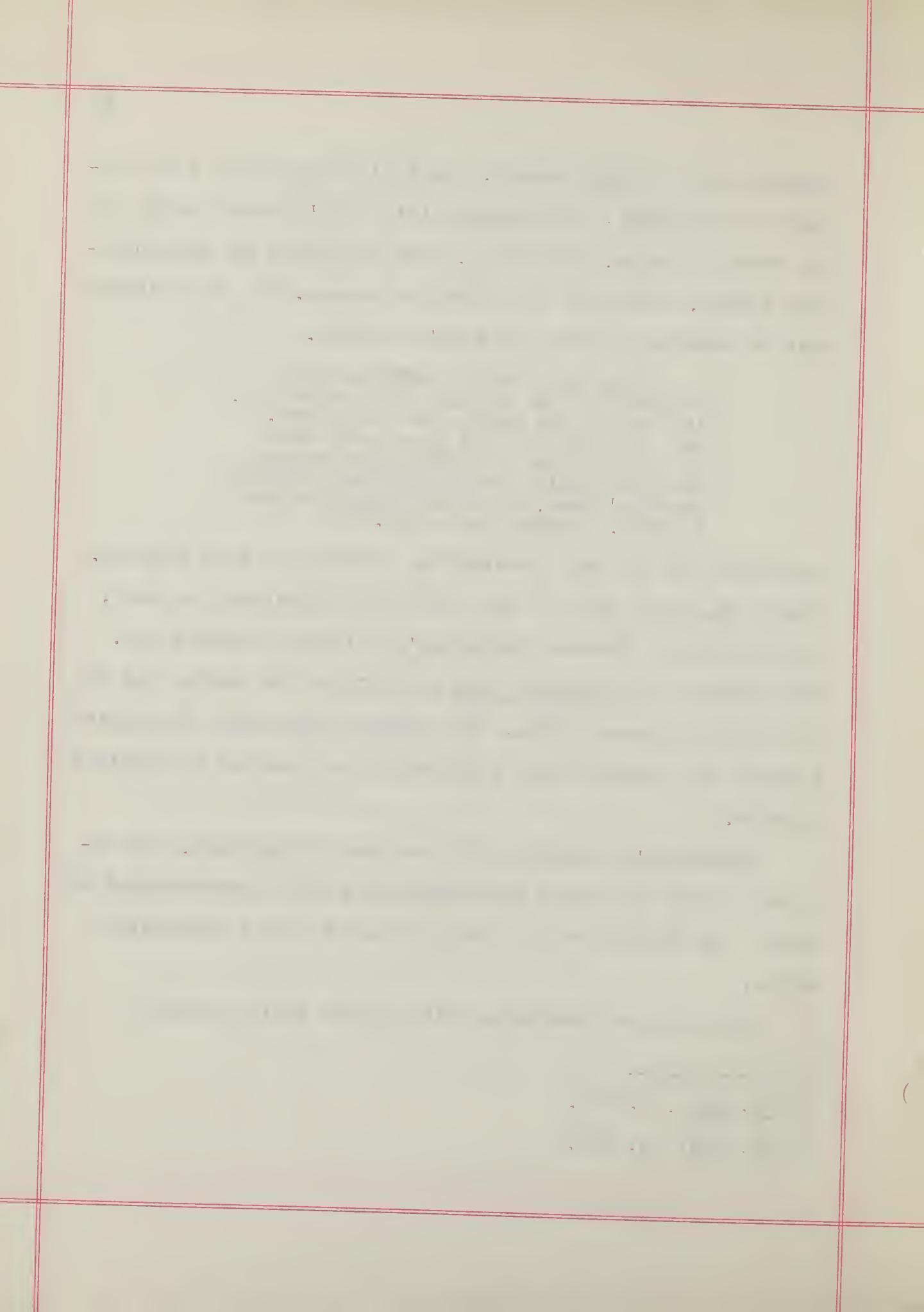
Hawthorne and his wife tutored the children as they grew up. Always they were part of the family and considered as such. Anything which affected Hawthorne's children affected him. The writing of The Marble Faun was delayed for months due to the severe illness of Una. The parents moved back to America because they wanted their children to be educated in American schools.

Hawthorne's domestic life was one of happiness, not entirely devoid of worry; but there was ever an undercurrent of calm. The spirits of the family blended into a harmonious whole.

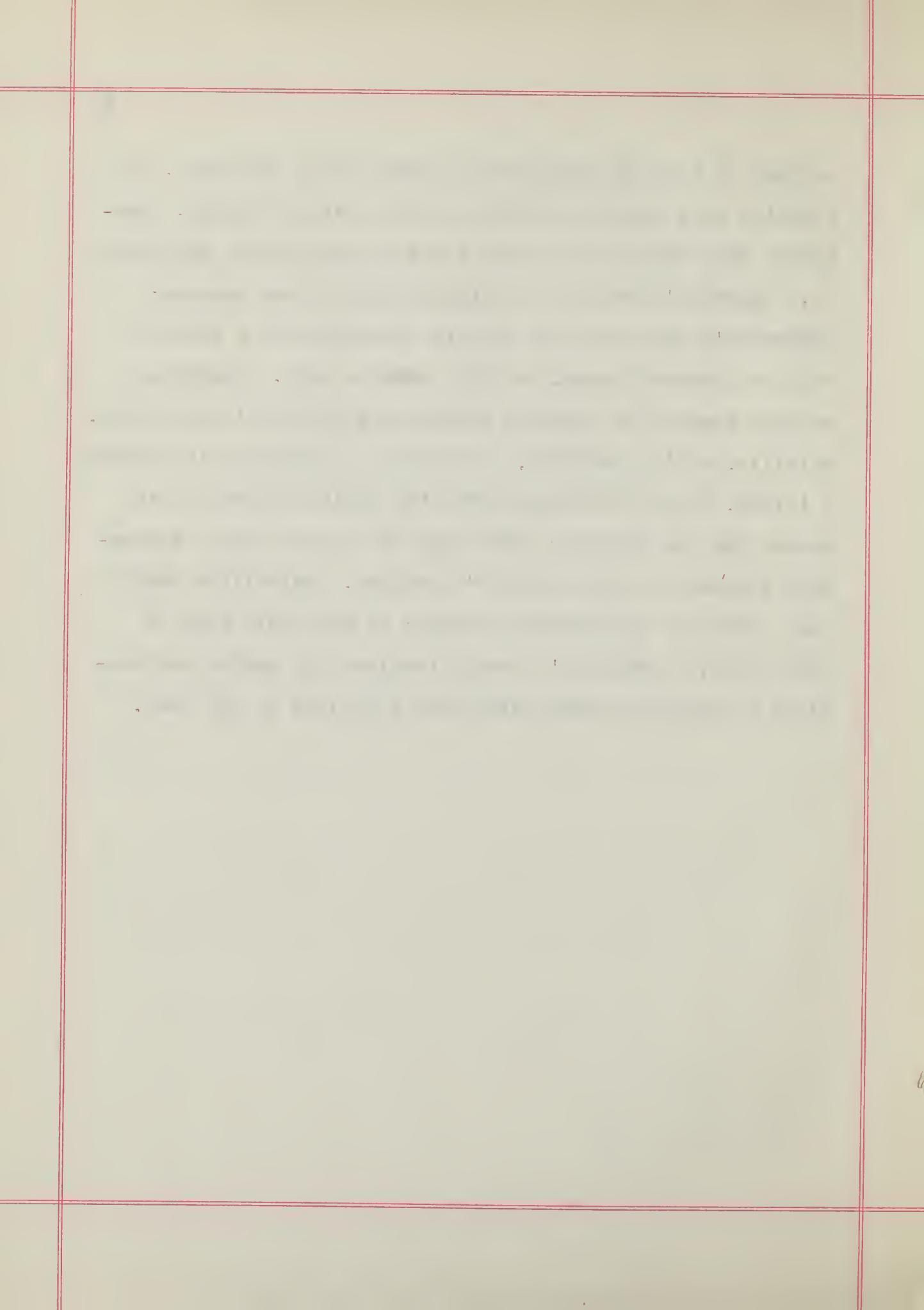
Melville and Hawthorne both enjoyed their greatest

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 131.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 129.



periods of literary productivity after their marriages. In Melville this was to provide an income for his family. Hawthorne felt less of this urge but was not entirely free from it. Melville's wife was lastingly loyal to her husband; Hawthorne's wife had this quality combined with a sense of what her husband needed to bring out his best. Hawthorne enjoyed seeing his children develop and live their own lives. Melville, on the contrary, was either so engrossed in earning a living, or so far removed from the world at hand in his search for the ultimate truth that he did not take a noticeable interest in his children's affairs. Melville's family was a drain on his creative energy; he wrote his best at great odds. Hawthorne's family inspired his genius and supplied a steady force which kept him alert to the best.

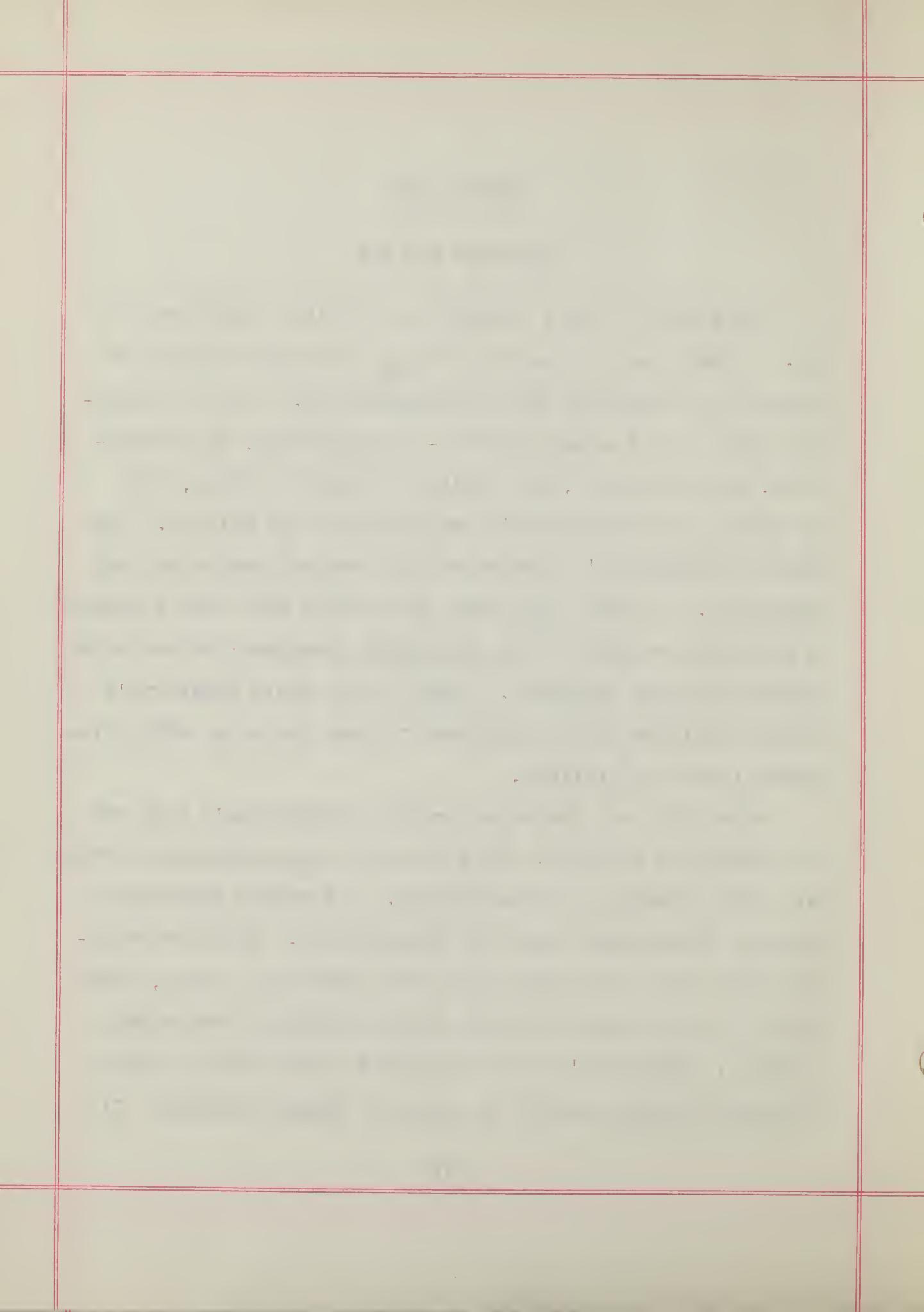


CHAPTER III

HAWTHORNE THE MAN

The purpose of this chapter is to picture Hawthorne the man. A study has been made in the two previous chapters of extrenal circumstances which surrounded him. Here the treatment will be of the man himself -- his solitude, his friendships, his philosophy, his attitude toward his books, and his reaction to the public's evaluation of his writing. The nature of Hawthorne's personality has created much study and discussion. It would seem that some traits have been stressed to the point of making them abnormally prominent; others quite normal have been neglected. Taken on the whole Hawthorne's seeming oddities can be explained to make him a man with quite normal likes and dislikes.

Among the most discussed traits of Hawthorne's life was his liking for solitude. This does not seem unreasonable when his early bringing up is considered. His mother absolutely withdrew from society when her husband died. Her three children made their own lives within the bounds of a large, roomy house or in the quiet outdoors which surrounded Sebago Lake in Maine. Hawthorne's first continued contact with a group of people occurred during his years at Bowdoin College. It



is little wonder that he did not adjust himself easily to being in the company of others and that he chose to have few friends. It is true that he withdrew from society for ten years after his college experience. In the letter to Longfellow quoted in Chapter I he revealed a full realization of what he had done and a helplessness in trying to pull himself into the main current of life. Of great significance were these words of his -- "there is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows."¹

The above quotation revealed Hawthorne's attitude toward society -- a desire to be part of it. Van Wyck Brooks said

He had no love of secrecy or darkness, uncanny as he seemed to the handful of neighbors who knew that he existed; he was merely following the household pattern.²

Brooks' opinion is strengthened by Hawthorne's own words

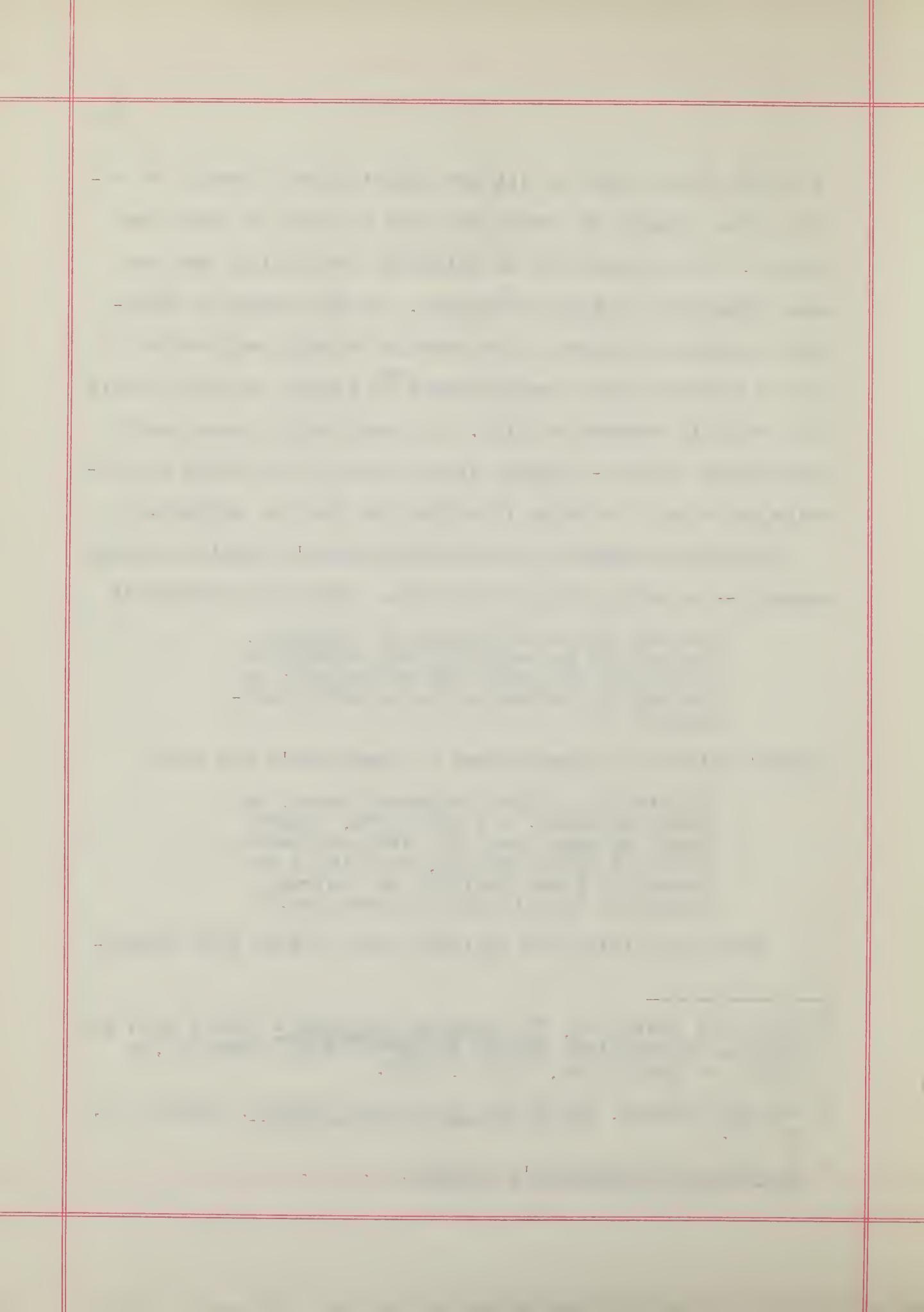
My wife is, in the strictest sense, my sole companion. . . . In truth, I have spent so many years in total seclusion from all human society, that it is no wonder if I now feel all my desires satisfied by this sole intercourse.³

With this liking for solitude some critics have associ-

¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, The American Notebooks (Based upon the Original Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library), a letter to Longfellow, June 4, 1837.

² Van Wyck Brooks, The Flowering of New England, Chapter XI, p. 215.

³ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journal, p. 111.



ated a morbid Hawthorne. This idea was due partly to the subject matter of his novels. They judged Hawthorne's individual taste by the atmosphere of his writing. Henry A. Bright in a letter to Julian Hawthorne at the time of his father's death wrote

Nothing annoys me more than the word "morbid" as applied to him, -- he was the least morbid of men, with a singularly sweet temper, and a very far-reaching charity; he was reserved and (in a sense) a proud man, who did not care to be worried or bored by people he was not fond of.⁴

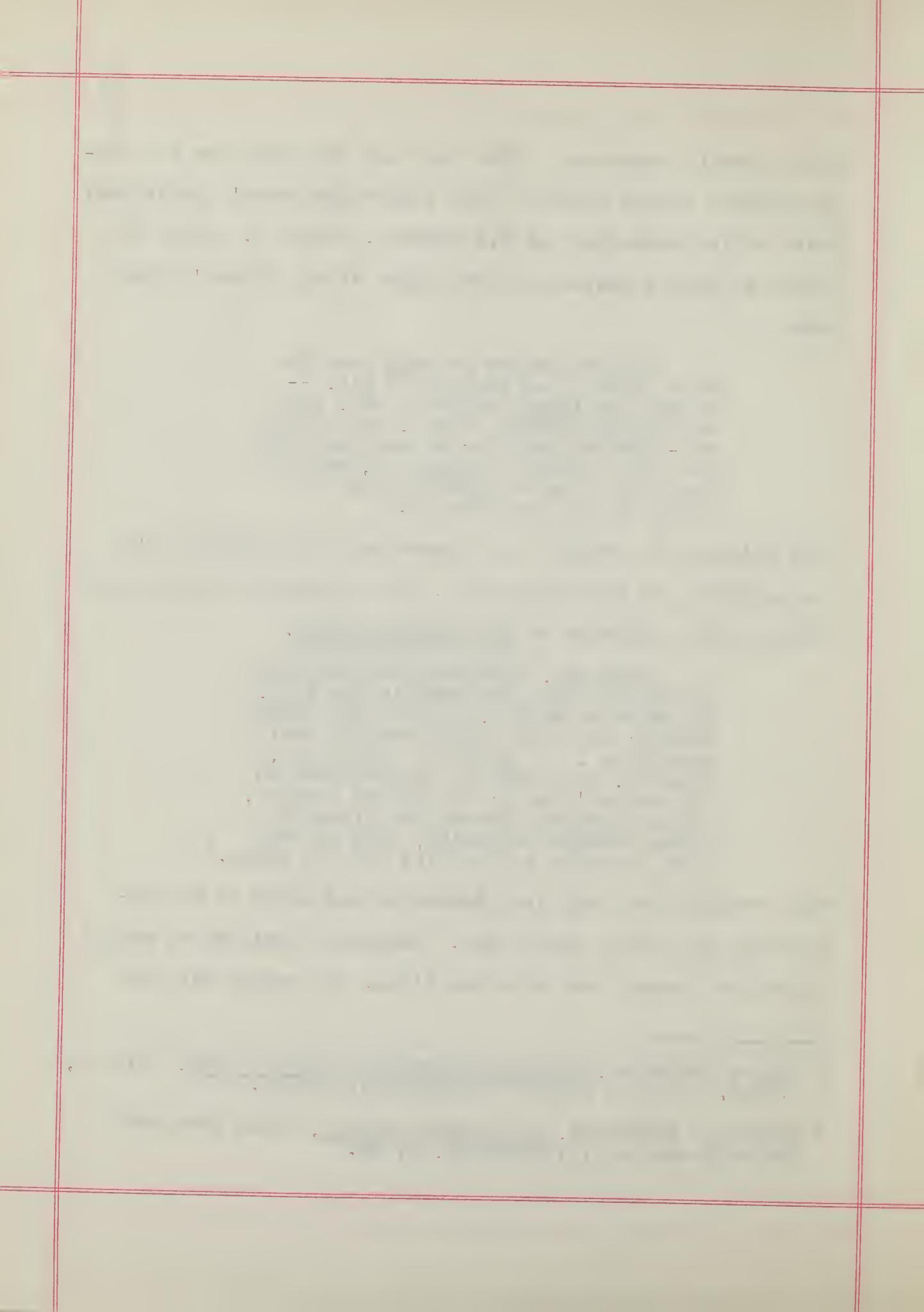
This opinion of a friend is in accordance with Hawthorne's own appraisal of his temperament. The quotation following is written with reference to The Scarlet Letter.

Even yet, though my thoughts were ultimately much absorbed in the task, it wears to my eye, a stern and sombre aspect; too much ungladdened by genial sunshine; . . . It is no indication, however, of a lack of cheerfulness in the writer's mind; for he was happier, while straying through the gloom of these sunless fantasies, than at any time since he had quitted the Old Manse.⁵

This revealed the fact that Hawthorne was aware of the accusation the public would make. Hawthorne admitted he was at times more social than at other times. He suited his own

⁴ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, Vol. II, p. 350, citing a letter from Henry A. Bright.

⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, cited from "The Custom House" an introduction, p. 64.



whim.

By the bye, Mr. Emerson gave me an invitation to dinner to-day, to be complied with or not, as might suit my convenience at the time; and it happens not to suit⁶

No such pictures of the man as Gorman pictured was true of Hawthorne. The following quotation seems biased.

All that he possessed was his imagination, a cursed shyness, an incurable addiction to solitude, and some degree -- not much -- of Yankee common sense.⁷

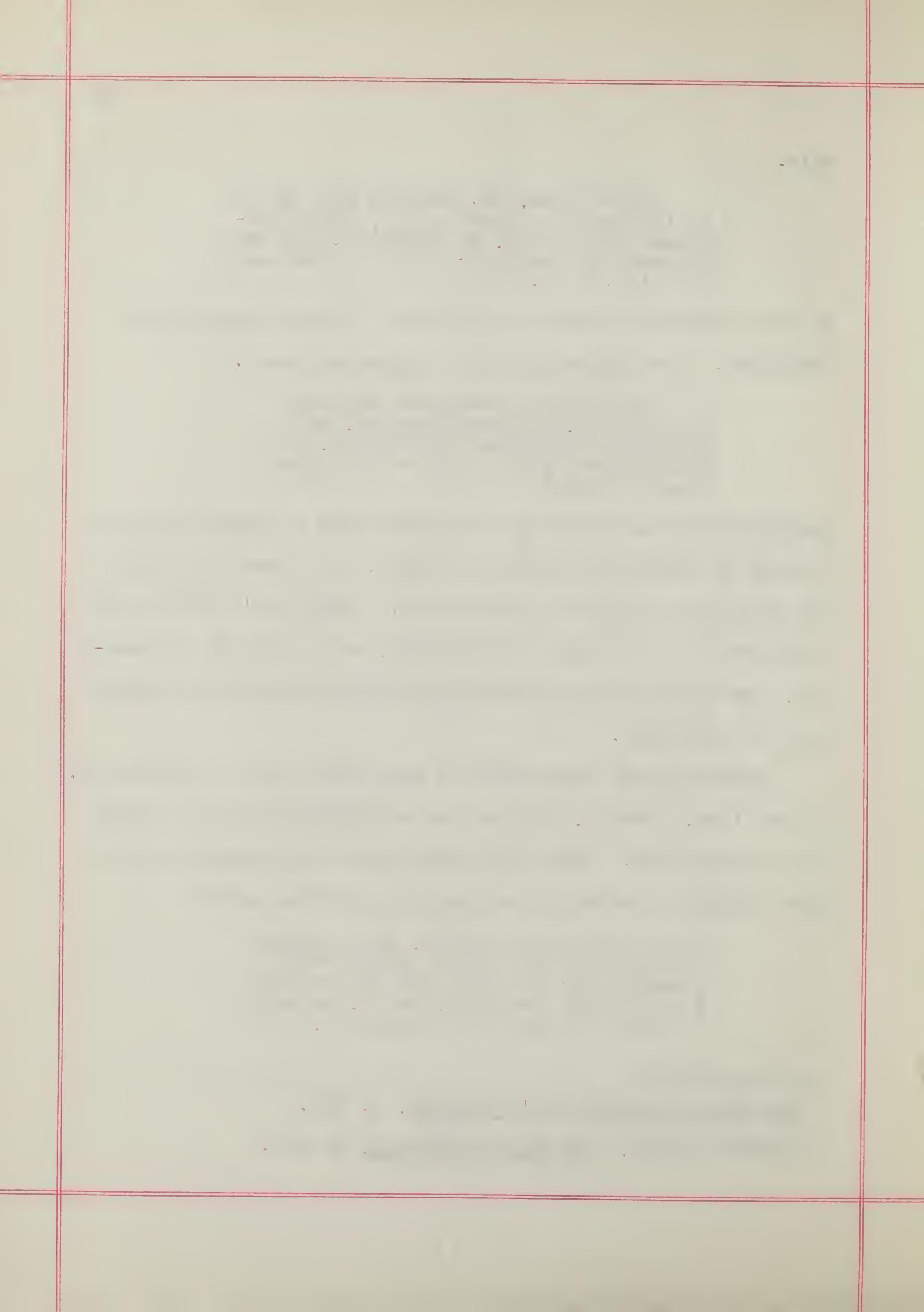
Hawthorne when at Brook Farm admitted that he needed the seclusion of solitude in which to write. His Brook Farm stay was barren of literary productivity. Hawthorne's liking for solitude was not caused by morbidity, nor a dislike for people, but by his early environment and the fact that he wrote best in seclusion.

Hawthorne was interested in that which went on about him. It was true, however, that he had a detached attitude toward his surroundings. His feeling was one of disinterest rather than dislike. According to Brooks to see the world

with a side-long glance, by a certain indirection, was second nature with (Hawthorne); and this was the mood of his romances conveyed, as if, in spite of all of their air of daylight, he

⁶ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journal, p. 103.

⁷ Herbert Gorman, A Study in Solitude, p. 103.



had never looked straight at Boston or Salem, as if he had always seen them over his shoulder.⁸

Hawthorne's son pictures his father's detachment in the following comprehensive quotation.

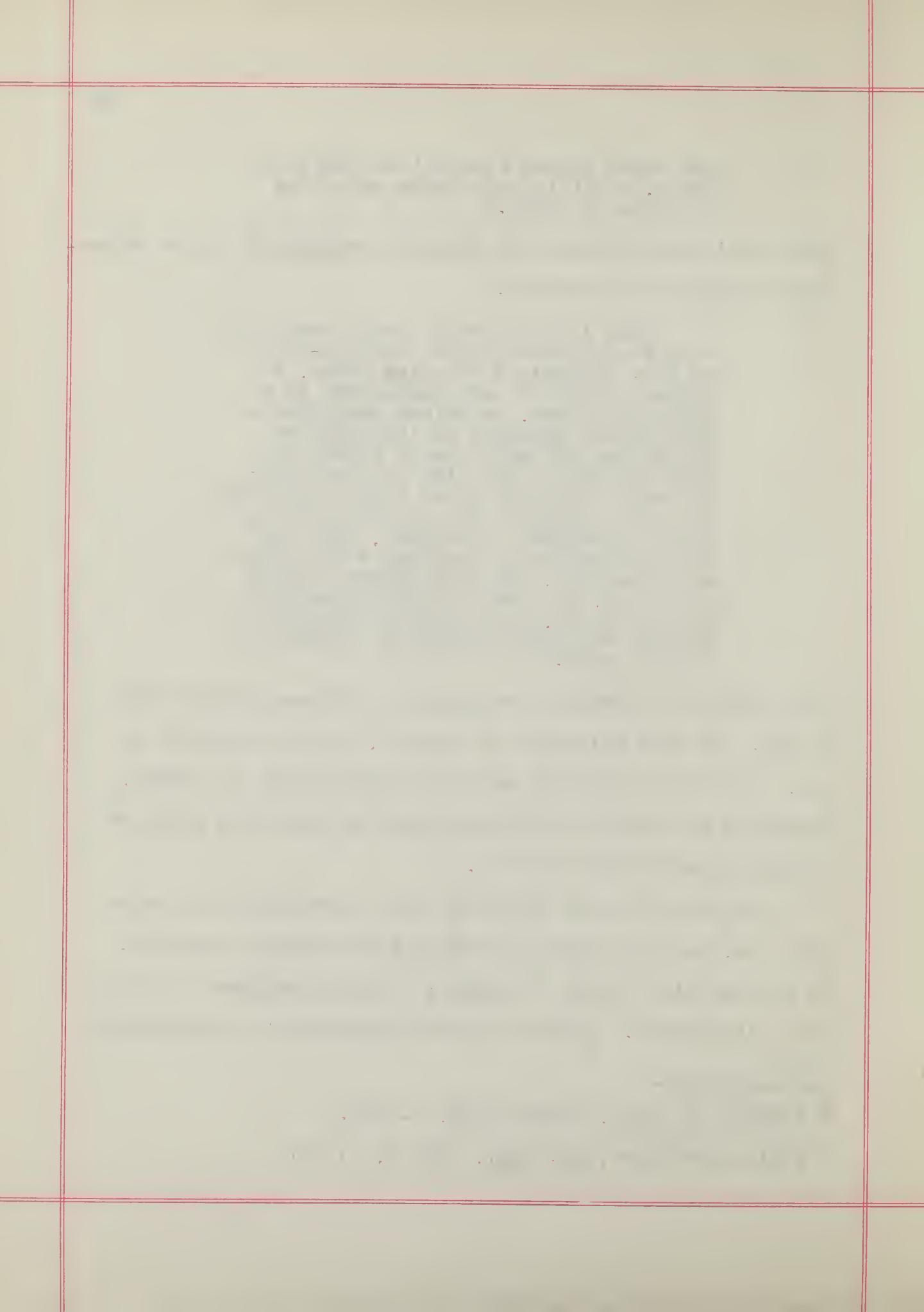
Thus if he chatted with a group of rude sea-captains in the smoking-room of Mrs. Blodgett's boarding house, or joined a knot of boon companions in a Boston bar-room, or talked metaphysics with Herman Melville on the hills of Berkshire, he would aim to appear in each instance a man like as they were; he would have the air of being interested in their interests and viewing life by their standards. Of course, this was only apparent; the real man stood aloof and observant, and only showed himself as he was, in case of his prerogatives being invaded, or his actual liberty of thought and action being in any way infringed upon.⁹

The journals of Hawthorne revealed the all-seeing eye which he had. He made notations of scenery, of old gentlemen he met, even of a little boy who hung around where he worked. Hawthorne was alert to what was going on about him although he kept himself aloof from it.

The friends which Hawthorne made throughout a lifetime were few, but they were all that the word friend connotes. He did not like groups of people; he much preferred to talk to an individual. Loyalty typified Hawthorne's relationship

⁸ Brooks, op. cit., Chapter XII, p. 288.

⁹ Julian Hawthorne, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 89.



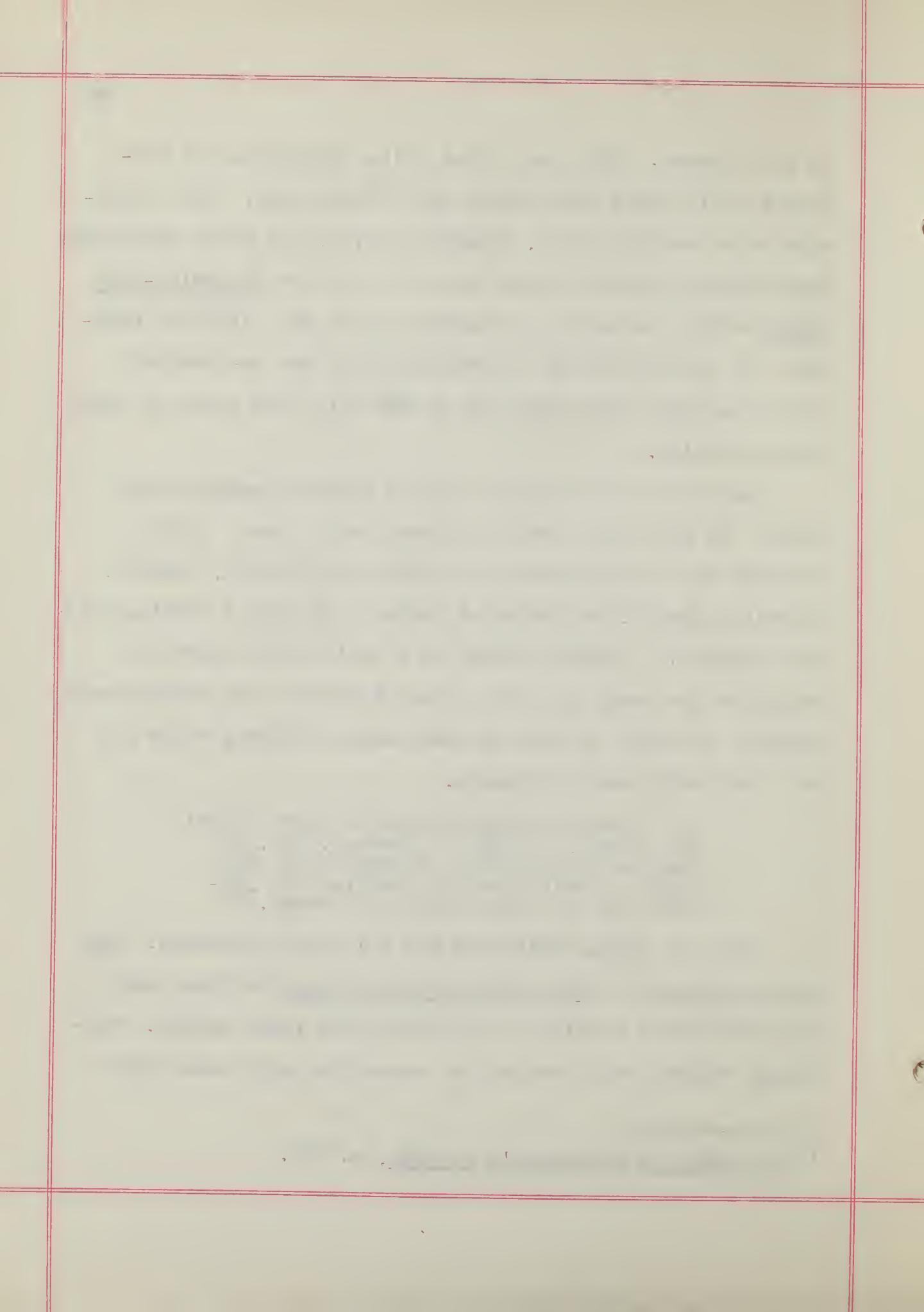
to his friends. The three outstanding friendships of Hawthorne's life were made during his college days. The recipients were Horatio Bridge, Franklin Pierce, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Horatio Bridge helped him to get The Twice-Told Tales before the public and acted as sort of a literary sponsor. It is interesting to notice that it was ex-President Pierce who went with Hawthorne on the trip from which he never returned alive.

Among the other literary men of Concord Hawthorne was happy. He was never closely intimate with them. In his journals there are accounts of calls from Thoreau, Emerson, Channing, Alcott, and Margaret Fuller. He took a fishing trip with Thoreau. A vivid account of a meeting with Margaret Fuller in the woods is given. Most often he took rambles with Emerson -- worthy of note was one taken on Sunday while his wife and family were in church.

Then he emerged from the green shade; and behold, it was Mr. Emerson, who, in spite of his clerical consecration, had found no better way of spending the Sabbath than to ramble among the woods.¹⁰

While in Europe Hawthorne was a literary cynosure. The Scarlet Letter and The House of Seven Gables had been well received abroad creating a reputation for their author. Hawthorne refused many invitations accepting only those which

¹⁰ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journal, p. 103.



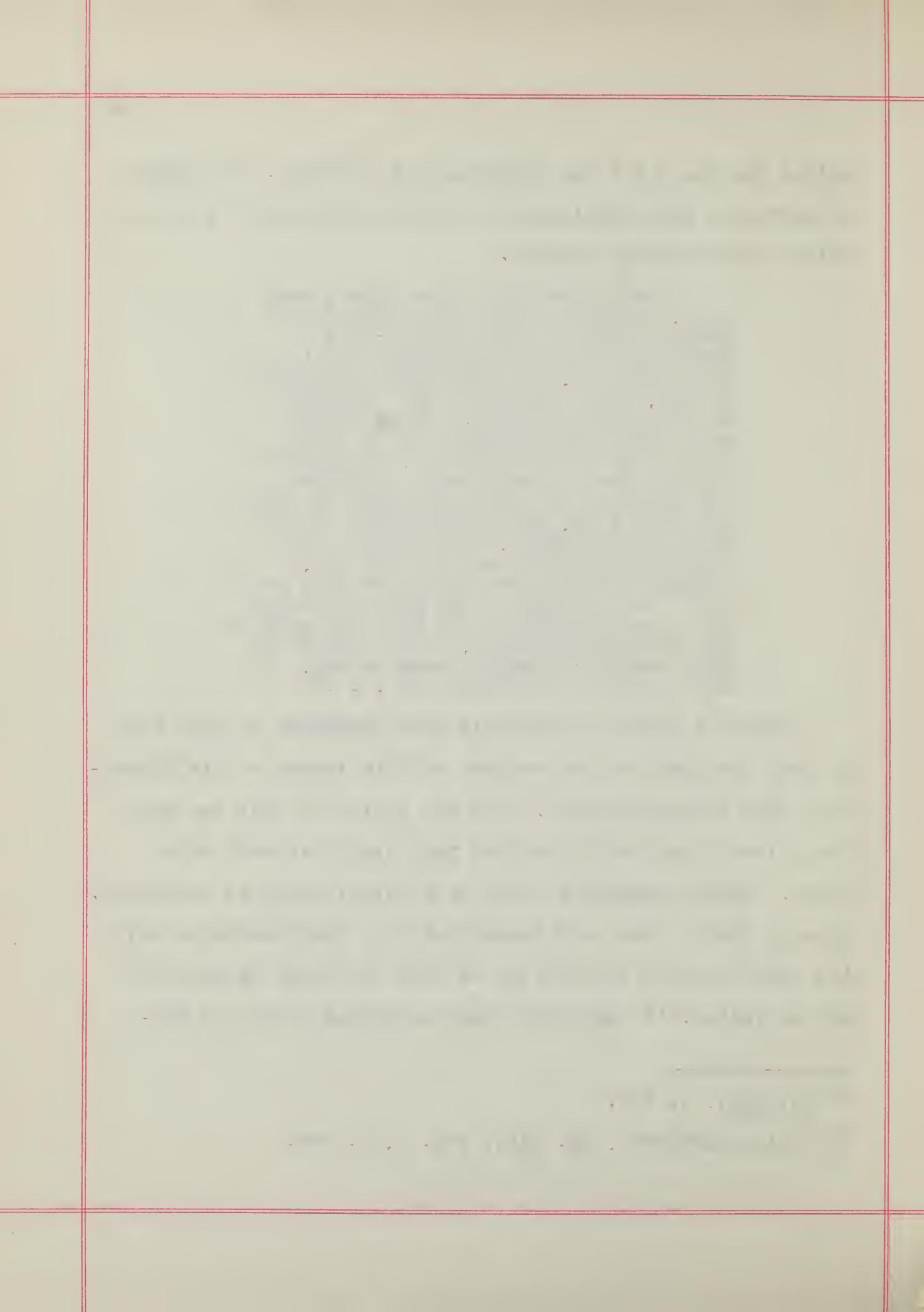
suited his fancy and the pleasure of his family. The words of Hawthorne which follow are a frank revelation of his attitude toward being lionized.

Leaving out the illustrious Jenny Lind, I suspect that I was myself the greatest lion of the evening; for a good many persons sought the felicity of knowing me, and had little or nothing to say, when that honor and happiness was conferred on them. It is surely very wrong and ill-mannered in people to ask for an introduction, unless they are prepared to make talk; it throws too great an expense and trouble on the wretched lion, who is compelled, on the spur of the moment, to concoct a conversable substance out of thin air, perhaps for the twentieth time that evening. On the whole, I am sure I did not say -- and I think I did not hear said -- one rememberable word, in the course of this evening; though, nevertheless, it was rather an agreeable one . . .¹¹

There is another friendship with Hawthorne enjoyed that is most pertinent to the subject of this thesis -- his friendship with Herman Melville. For the period of only one year they lived close enough so that they could see each other often. Julian Hawthorne rated this relationship as important. He said "But it was with Herman Melville that Hawthorne held the most familiar intercourse at this time both personally and by letter."¹² Melville found a kindred spirit in Haw-

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 223.

¹² Julian Hawthorne, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 398.



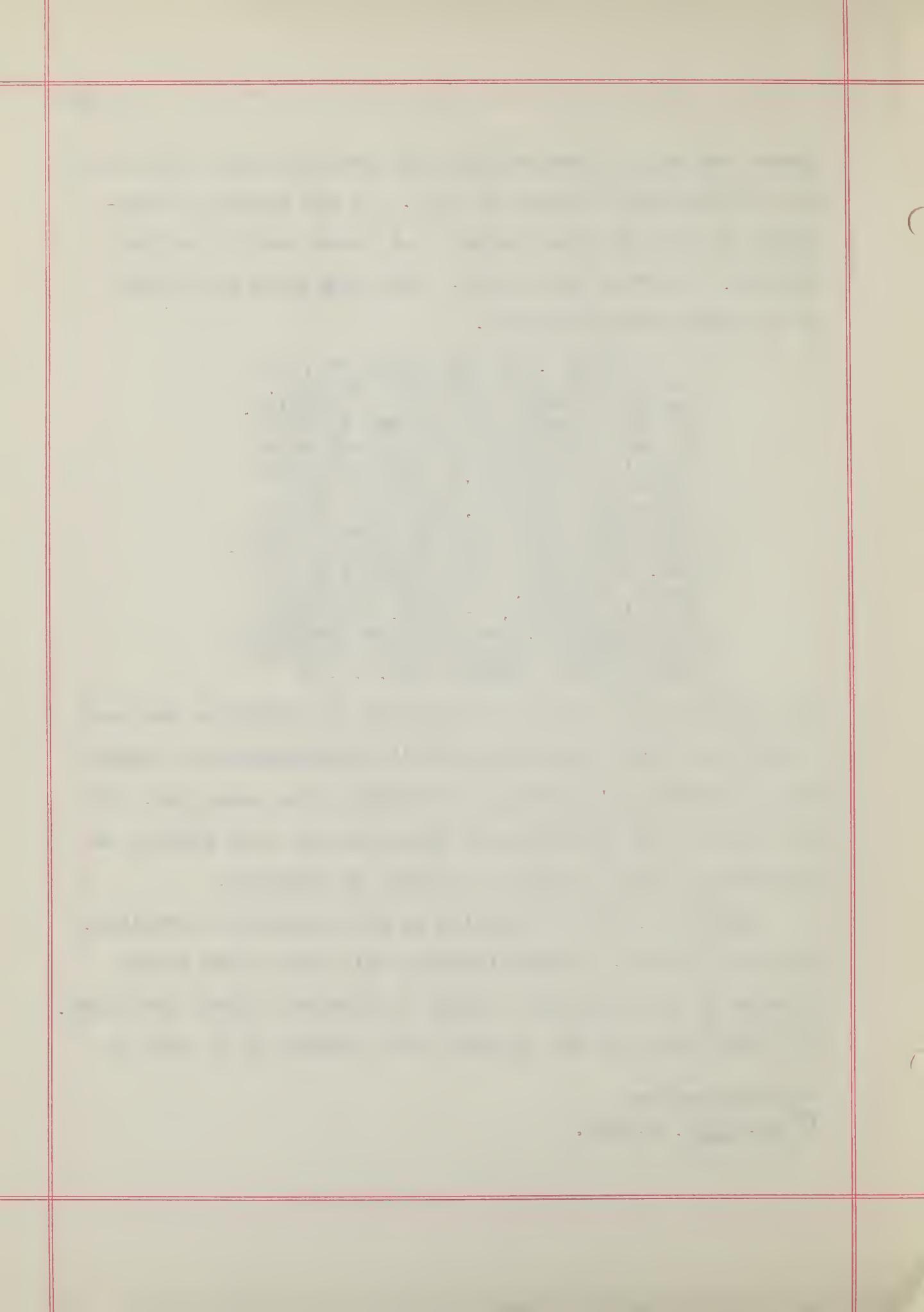
thorne who would discourse with him upon questions concerning the conventional verities of life. In his letters to Hawthorne he did not mince matters but spoke openly upon any subject, no matter how sacred. This quotation was written in the true Melville strain.

If ever, my dear Hawthorne, in the eternal times that are to come, you and I shall sit down in Paradise, in some little shady corner by ourselves; and if we shall by any means be able to smuggle a basket of champagne there (I won't believe in a Temerance Heaven), and if we shall then cross our celestial legs in the celestial grass that is forever tropical, and strike our glasses and our heads together, till both musically ring in concert, -- then, O my dear fellow-mortal, how shall we pleasantly discourse of all the things manifold which now so distress us . . .¹³

The picture which we have of Melville and Hawthorne has been brought to light through Melville's correspondence. Almost none of Hawthorne's letters to Melville were preserved. For this reason the friendship of these two men will have to be presented chiefly through an account of Melville.

Hawthorne, the man reputed so often as being a recluse, did have friends. He was intimate with only a few choice friends of long standing. While in Concord, Europe and Lenox, he lived among men and enjoyed their company if he felt so

¹³ Op. cit., p. 403.

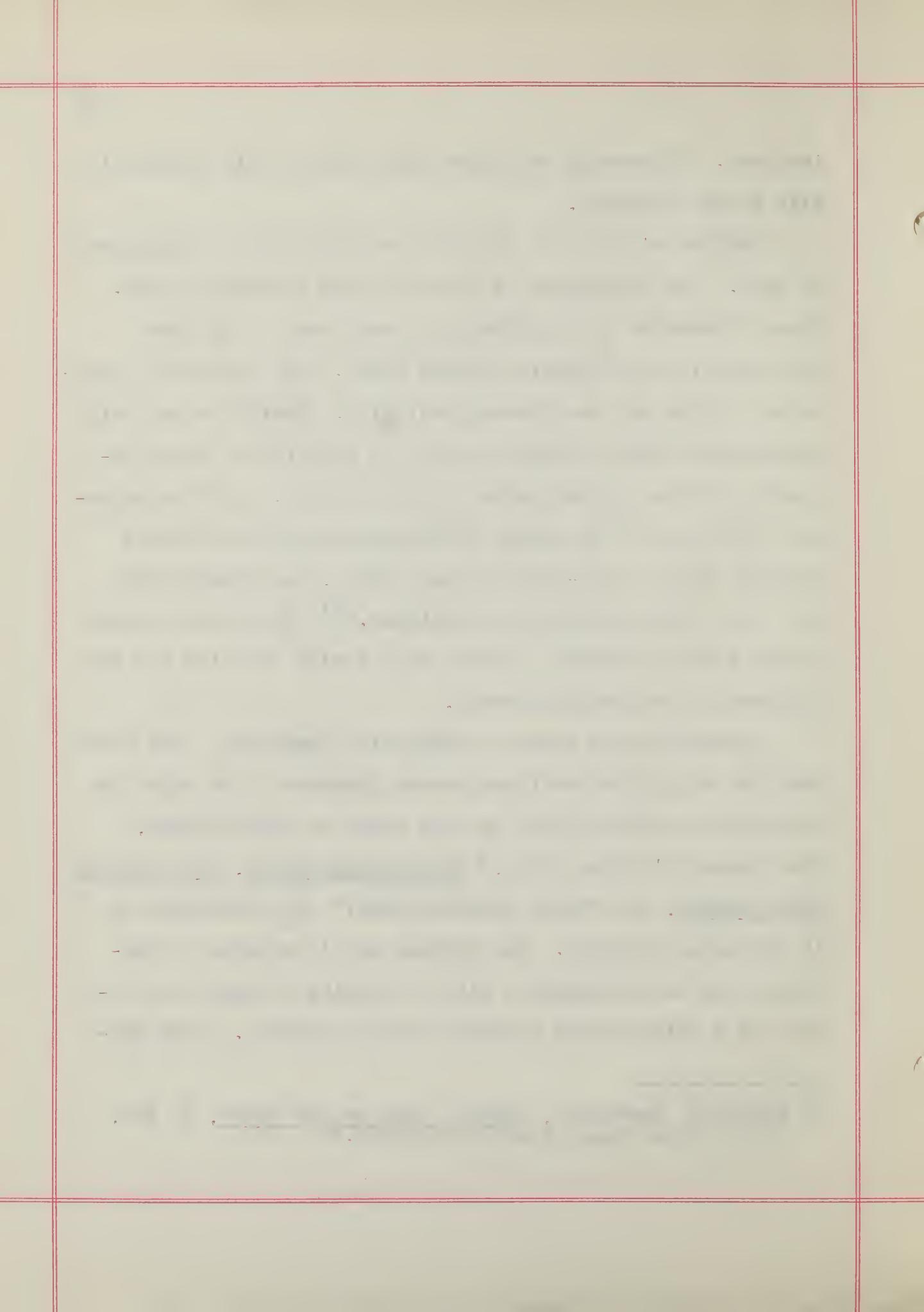


inclined. Noteworthy and significant here is his friendship with Herman Melville.

Hawthorne's life of solitude set his mind and imagination to work. His philosophy of life he never defined as such. Those interested in formulating it must pick it up from gleanings in his journals and his books. The prevailing philosophy of his day was transcendentalism. Hawthorne was not a transcendentalist because sin and the doctrine of moral depravity of the Puritans were too real to him. In "The Celestial Railroad" he described transcendentalism as "looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness."¹⁴ His Puritan sense of sin was too concrete a thing in his mind to allow for the airiness of the transcendental.

Puritanism was innate in Nathaniel Hawthorne. Its vivid doctrine of sin and evil confronted Hawthorne. He tried to solve this problem of sin in such words as "Ethan Brand," "The Minister's Black Veil," The Scarlet Letter, The House of Seven Gables, and "Young Goodman Brown." His treatment of it was never didactic. The problem of sin existed to Hawthorne and he experimented with it knowing he would not arrive at a satisfactory solution for the problem. "The Min-

¹⁴ Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mosses from an Old Manse, p. 242, citing from "the Celestial Railroad."

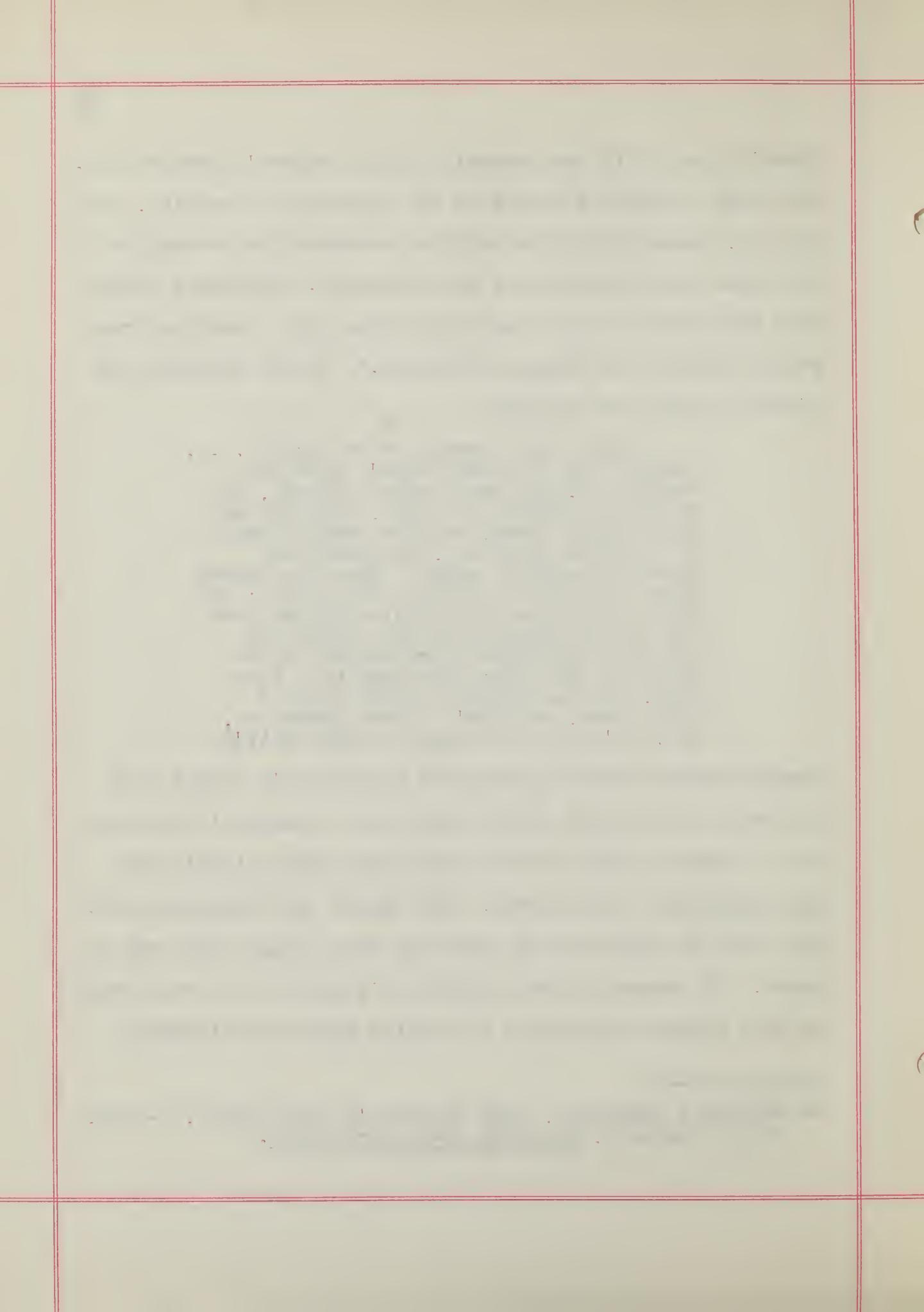


ister's Black Veil" was symbolic of its author's idea of sin. The young minister troubled at the hypocrisy of mankind, even his own, donned the black veil to represent the secrecy of the human heart which keeps sin concealed. Hawthorne hinted that the veil was only a material emblem that "must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers." On his deathbed the minister asked the onlookers

Why do you tremble at me alone? . . .
 Tremble also at each other! Have men
 avoided me, and women shown no pity, and
 children screamed and fled, only for my
 black veil? What, but the mystery which
 it obscurely typifies, has made this
 piece of crape so awful? When the friend
 shows his inmost heart to his friend; the
 lover to his best beloved; when man does
 not vainly shrink from the eye of his
 Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the
 secret of his sin; then deem me a mon-
 ster, for the symbol beneath which I
 have lived, and die! I look around me,
 and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!¹⁵

"Young Goodman Brown" illustrated its author's belief that sin was in the hearts of all though not apparent in everyday life. Goodman Brown saw the parson and other dignitaries with the black veil removed. The result was disillusioning. There was an "Unpardonable Sin" for which Ethan Brand was in quest. In answer to the lime-burner's query as to the nature of this "Unpardonable Sin" he replied with the following

¹⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil", p. 449, Norman Foerster, American Poetry and Prose.



words.

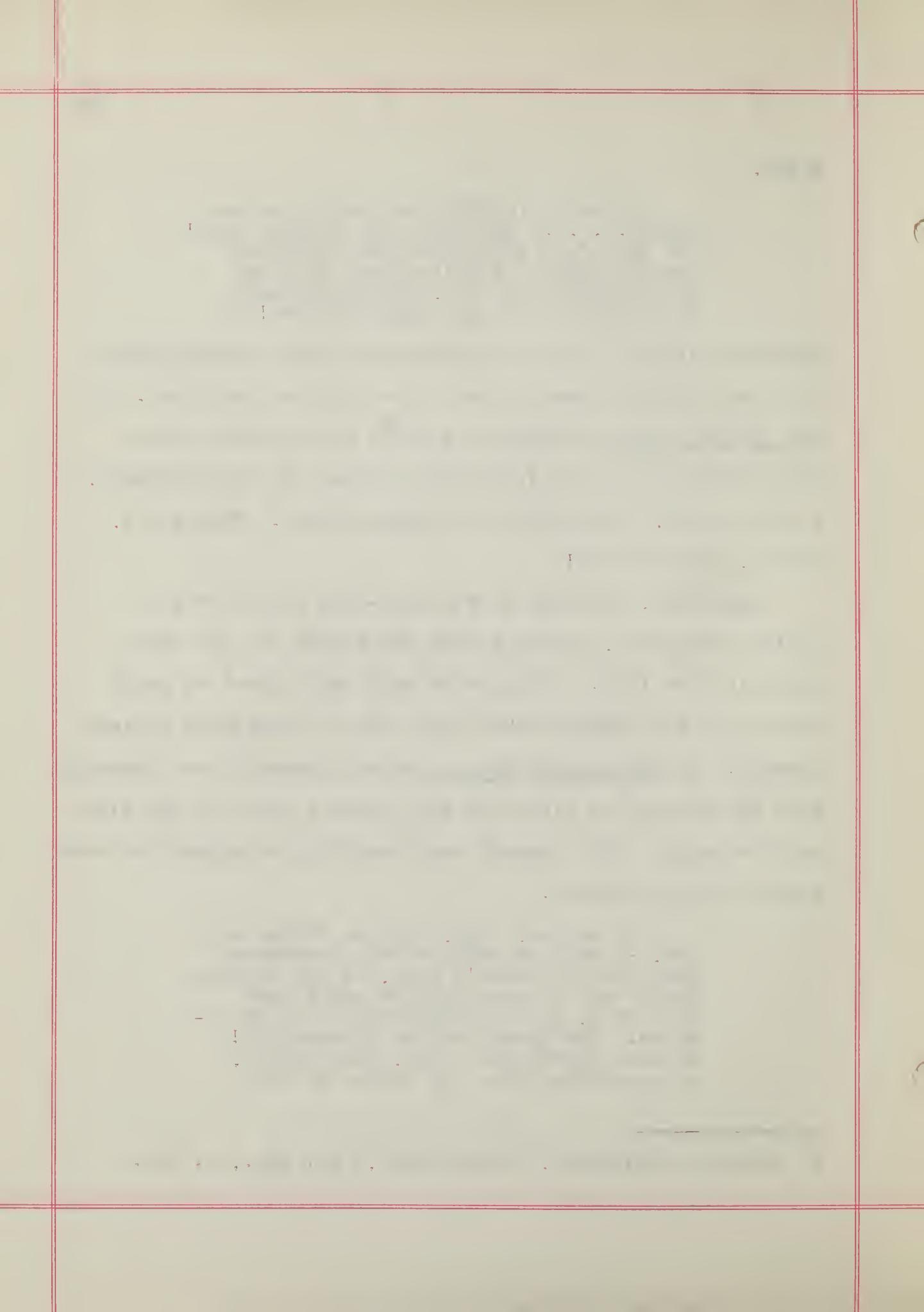
It is a sin that grew within my own breast. . . .¹⁶ A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrifice everything to its own mighty claims!¹⁶

Hawthorne claimed that the "Unpardonable Sin" resulted when the moral nature ceased to keep pace with the intellect. In The Scarlet Letter Dimmesdale pointed out to Hester that Chillingworth was the worst sinner because he had "violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!"

Hawthorne, contrary to the deep-dyed belief of his Puritan ancestors, believed that punishment for sin took place in this life. Ethan Brand suffered torment on earth because of the "Unpardonable Sin" which he committed against himself. In The Scarlet Letter Arthur Dimmesdale was thankful that God saw fit to visit him with torment while he was still on this earth. This thought was forcefully expressed in these words of his to Hester.

It may be, that, when we forget our God, -- when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul, it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows; and he is merciful! He both proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this

¹⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Ethan Brand," op. cit., p. 476.



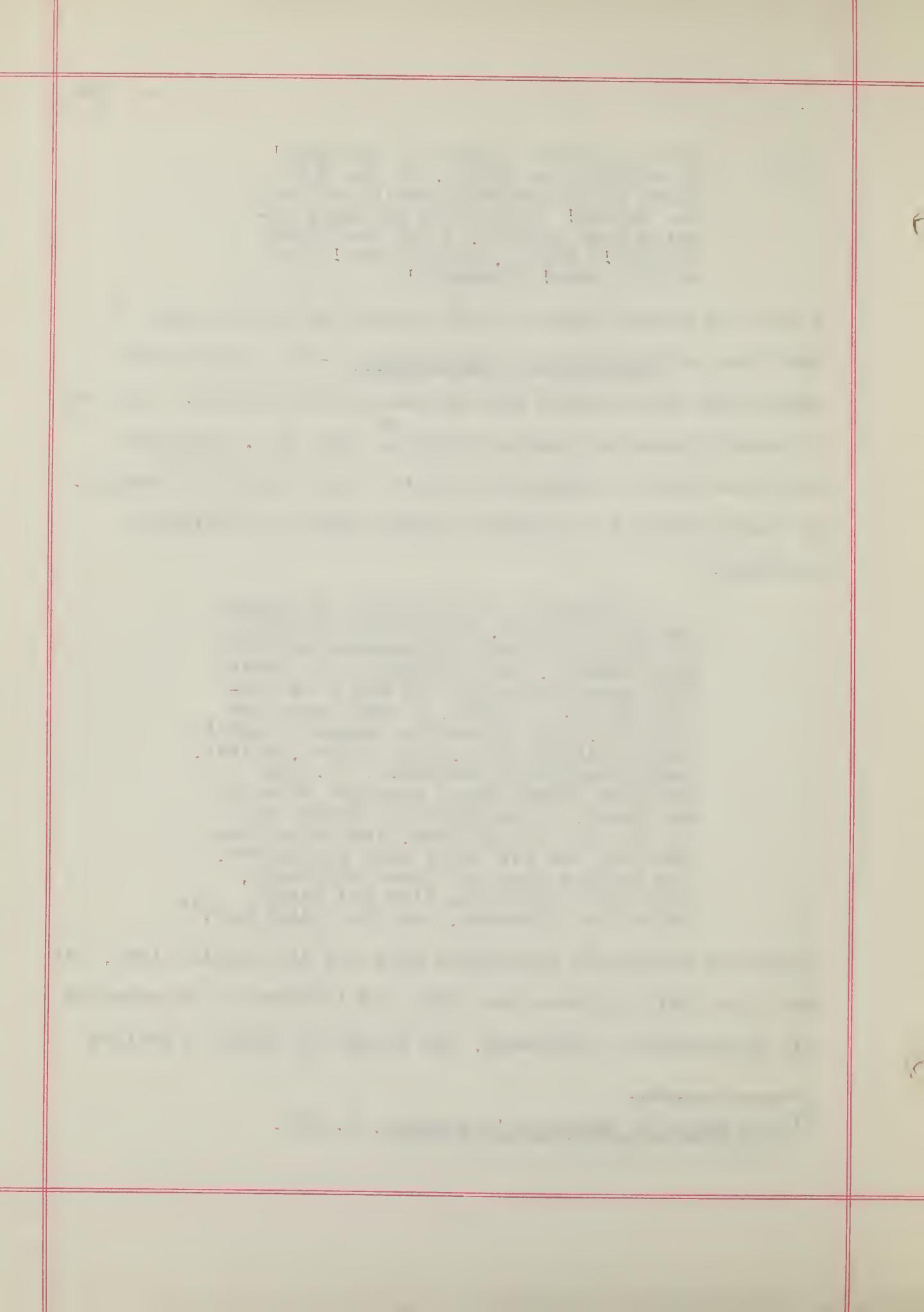
burning torture always at red-heat!
By bringing me hither, to die this
death of triumphant ignominy before
the people! Had either of these ag-
onies been wanting, I had been lost
forever! Praise, be his name! His
will be done! Farewell!

A still different aspect of the problem of sin is found in the theme of The House of Seven Gables -- the sins of one generation were visited upon succeeding generations. This was a commonly accepted Puritan doctrine about sin. Hawthorne could not seem to escape the spirit of his Puritan ancestors. An Easter service in England brought forth the following anathema.

The spirit of my Puritan ancestors was mighty in me, and I did not wonder at their being out of patience with all this mummery, which seemed to me worse than papistry because it was a corruption of it. At last, a canon gave out the text, and preached a sermon of about twenty minutes long, the coldest, driest, most superficial rubbish. . . . The Puritans showed their strength of mind and heart, by preferring a sermon of an hour and a half long, into which the preacher put his whole soul and spirit, and lopping away all these externals, into which religious life had first leafed and flowered, and then petrified.¹⁷

Hawthorne cringed at Puritanism with all its implications, yet was never able to break away from its influence. He resented its hardness and narrowness, but could not escape a feeling

¹⁷ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journal, p. 233.



of Puritan thoroughness.

Hawthorne's heritage exerted a strong power over him, but he would not conform. His religious life was greatly lacking if church attendance were a criterion of his religion. His son remembered seeing his father in church only once.

I find that my respect for clerical people, as such, and my faith in the utility of their office, decrease daily. We certainly do need a new Revelation, a new system; for there seems to be no life in the old.¹⁸

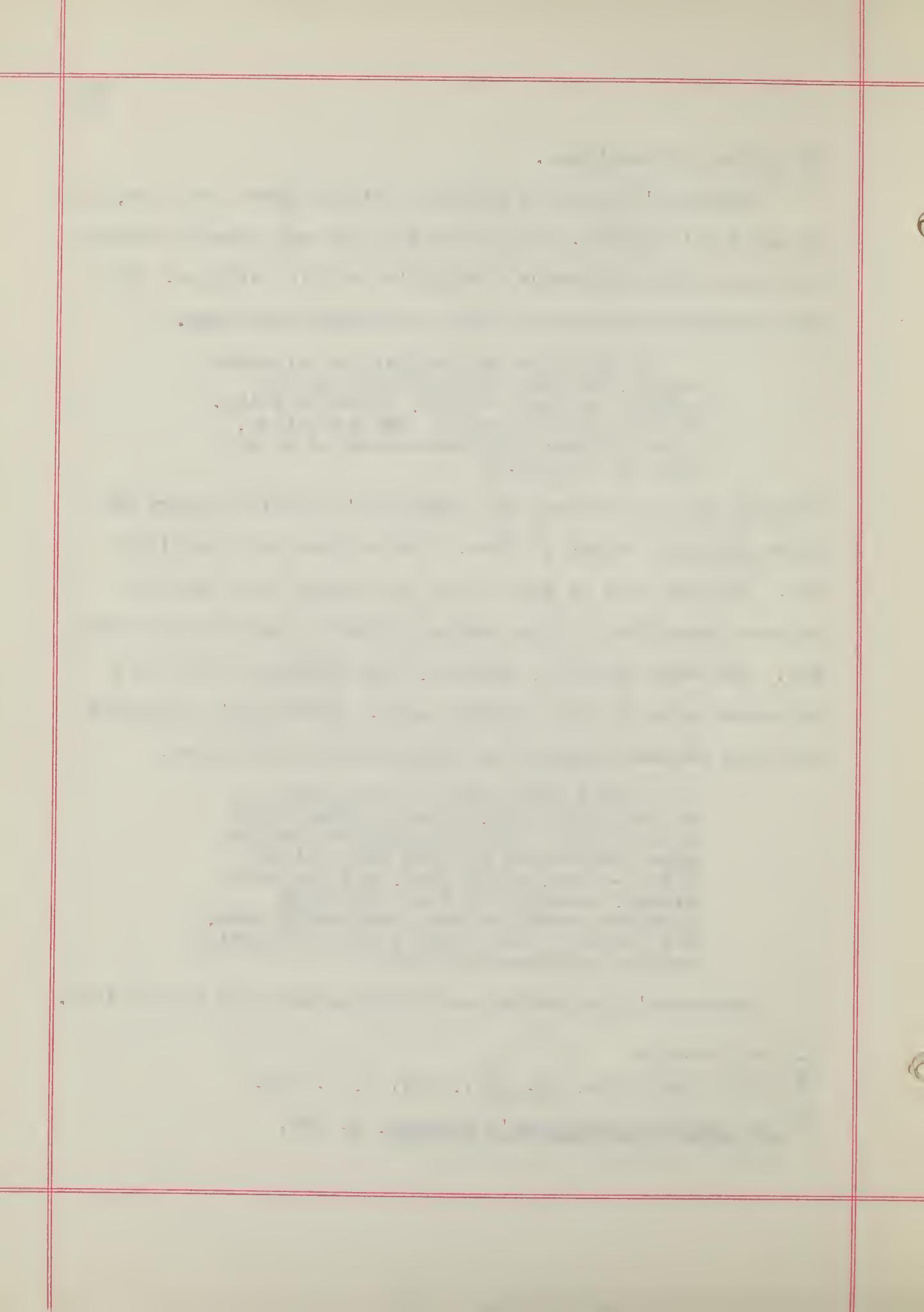
Peculiar and of interest was Hawthorne's drawing toward the Roman Catholic church in Rome. The confessional intrigued him. He felt that it was a boon to mankind to be able to relieve themselves of the burden of their consciences in that way. One does not feel, however, that Hawthorne felt it a permanent cure for the depraved soul. Hawthorne's expressed religion embraced God and an immortality of some form.

God himself cannot compensate us for being born, in any period short of eternity. All the misery we endure here constitutes a claim for another life; -- and, still more, all the happiness involves something more than earth owns, and something more than a mortal capacity for the enjoyment of it.¹⁹

Hawthorne's philosophy and religion were his way of life.

¹⁸ Julian Hawthorne, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 291.

¹⁹ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journal, p. 180.



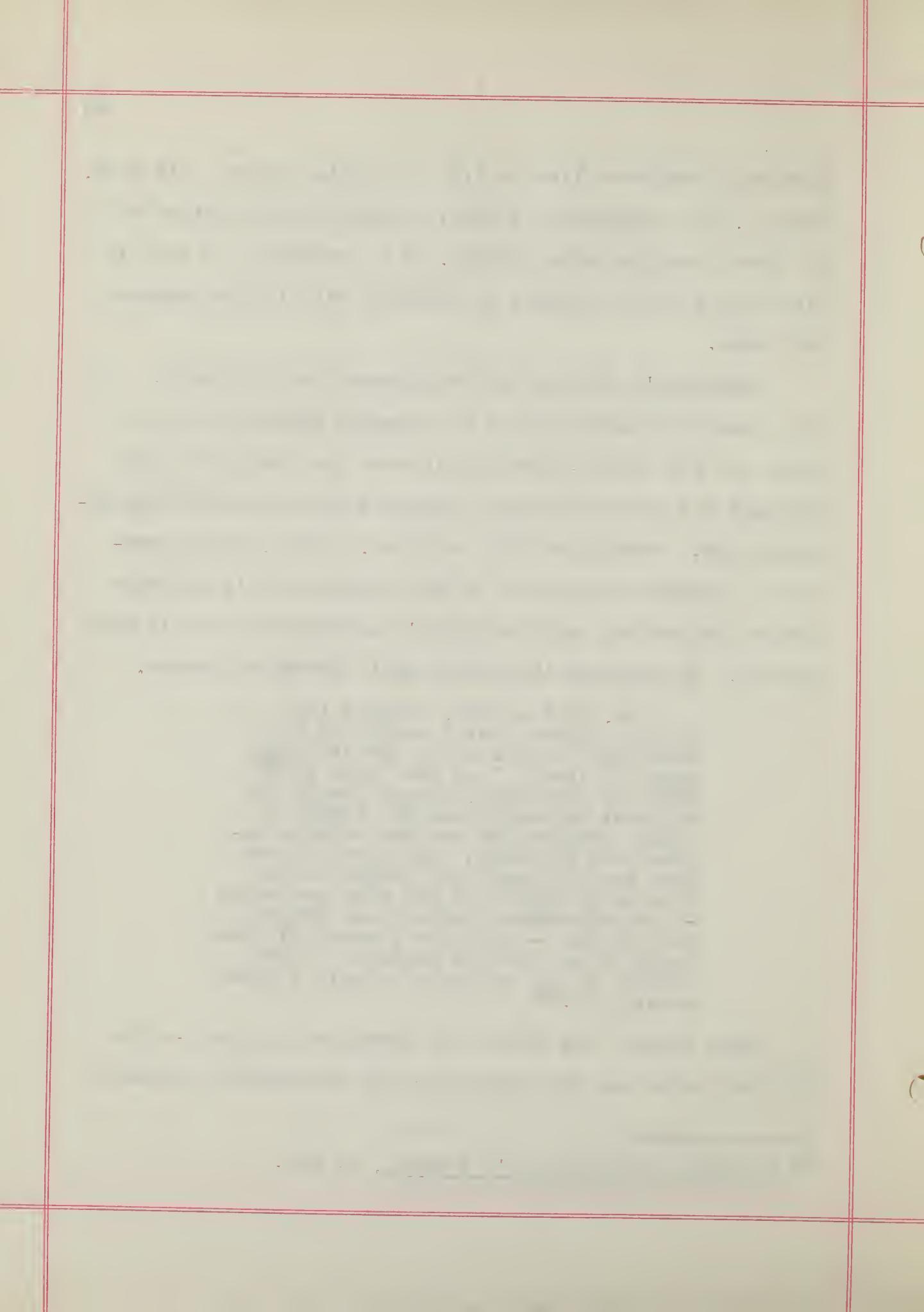
Outwardly Hawthorne lived a life of little action. His mind, however, was constantly at work. Since few conclusions can be drawn from his actual doings, it is necessary to look to his thought life expressed in concrete form in his journals and books.

Hawthorne's writing was the expression of himself. For this reason it seems logical to say that Hawthorne did not write for the public. His novels were the result of great struggle and conflict within himself which put into words relieved him. Writing was his vocation, though, not an avocation. Hawthorne gives an honest picture of his attitude toward his writing and the public's acceptance of it in his journal. He observed that Leigh Hunt thrived on praise.

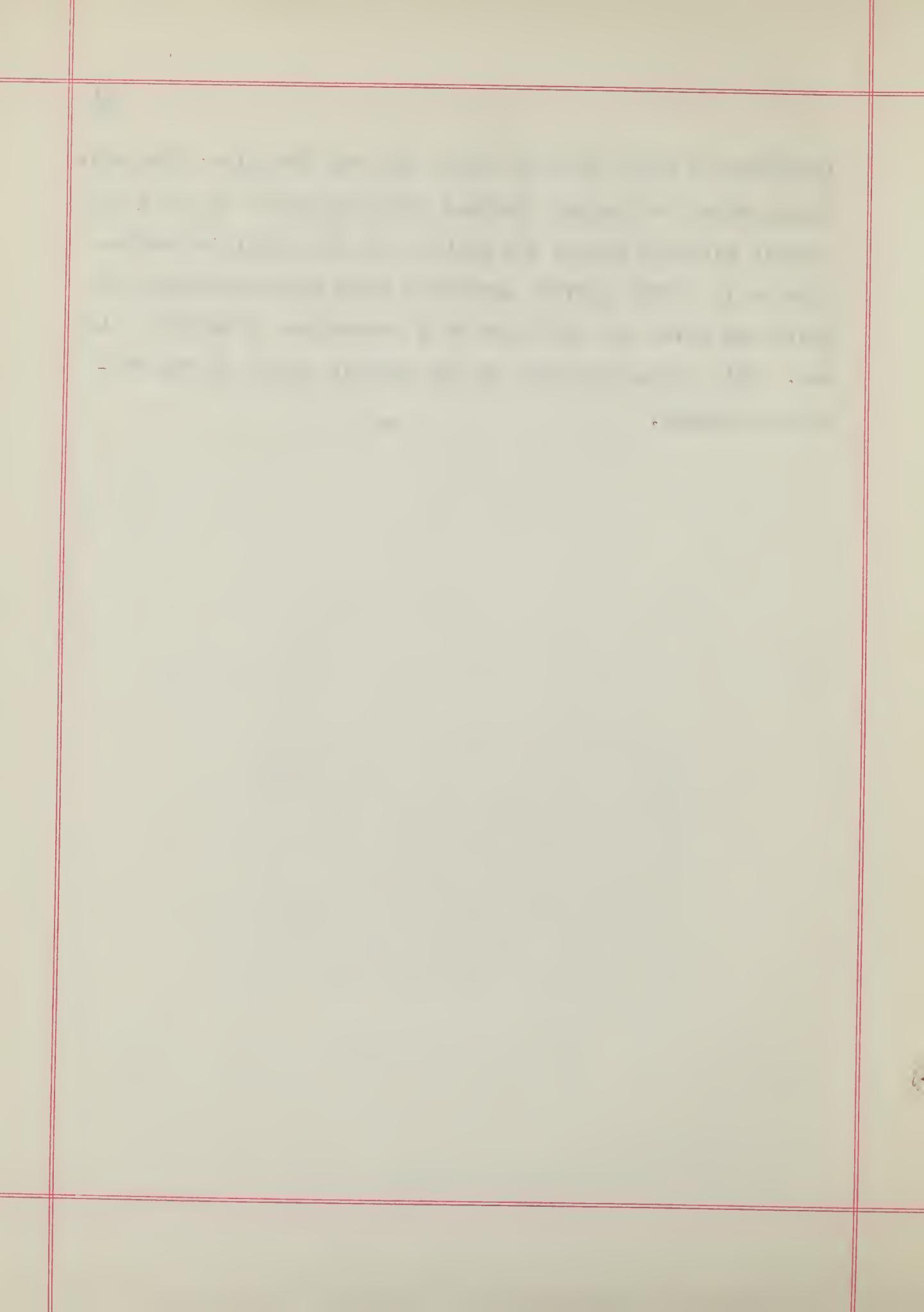
He, on his part, praised the Scarlet Letter; but I really do not think that I like to be praised viva voce; at least, I am glad when it is said and done with, though I will not say that my heart does not expand a little towards the man who rightly appreciates my books. But I am of somewhat sterner stuff and tougher fibre than Leigh Hunt; and the dark seclusion -- the atmosphere without any oxygen of sympathy -- in which I spent all the years of my youthful manhood -- have enabled me to do almost as well without as with it.²⁰

This chapter has dealt with Hawthorne the man -- his solitude which was not morbidity; his friendships the most

²⁰ The Heart of Hawthorne's Journal, p. 198.



important of which for this study was with Melville; his philosophy which was largely deduced from his mental way of life; and his attitude toward his writing and the public's evaluation of it. This picture presented those characteristics of Hawthorne which are pertinent to a comparison of Melville the man. This comparison will be the subject matter of the following chapter.



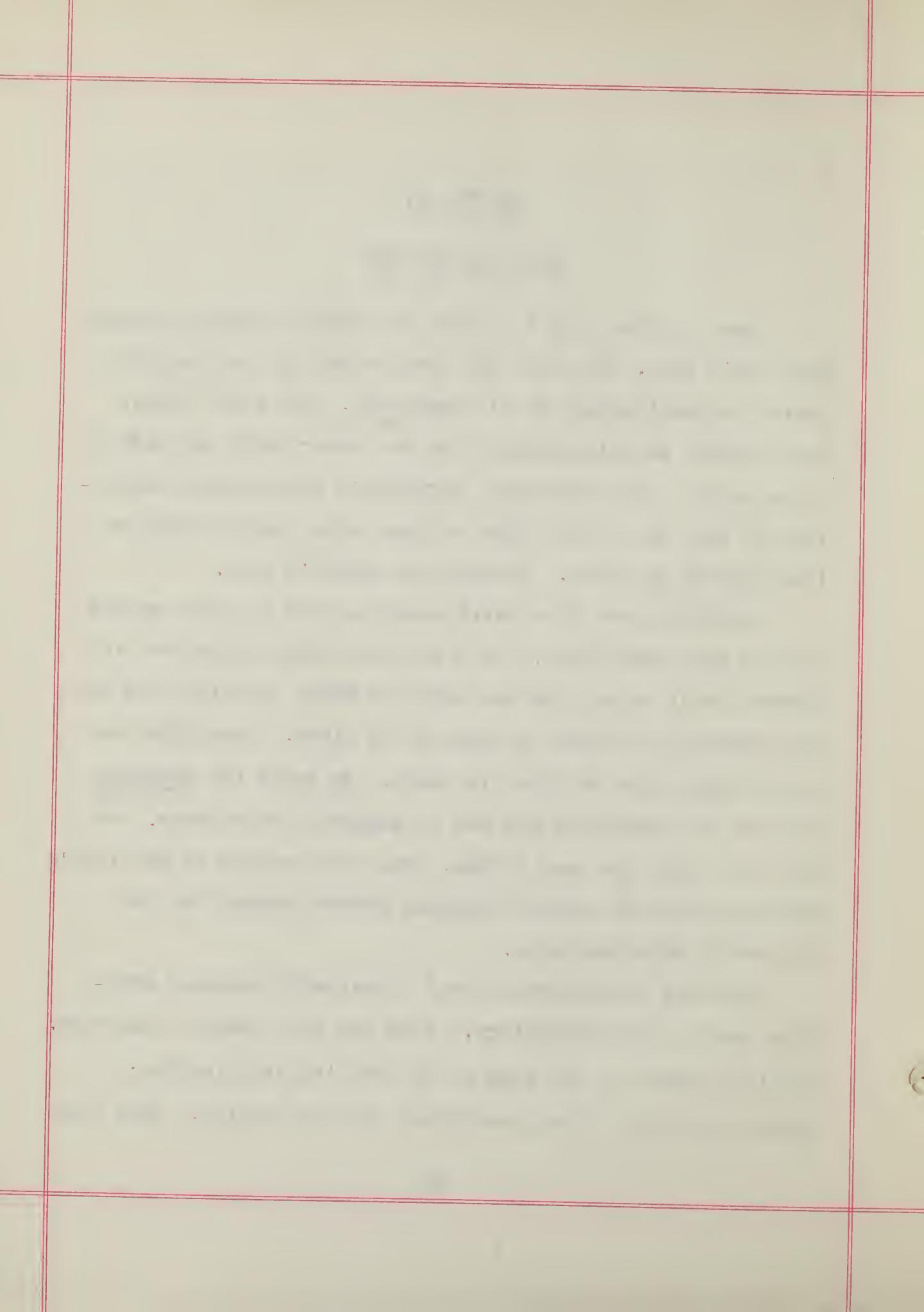
CHAPTER IV

MELVILLE THE MAN

There are few direct sources for facts concerning Herman Melville's life. He wrote few letters and did not keep his journal as assiduously as did Hawthorne. His early novels were largely autobiographical but one never feels too safe in interpreting them literally. Melville's metaphysical wanderings if they were to be taken at face value would reveal an inconsistent Melville. Probably he wouldn't care.

Melville lived in a world among men but he never seemed to care much about them. He looked upon them all as he did himself as if to say "we are here but why?" Melville did not need physical solitude in order to be alone. Turtlelike he could always draw up into his shell. On board the Acushnet he lived in a world of his own -- imaginary to be sure, but more real than the real to him. The only records of Melville's dealings with men concern business matters except for his friendship with Hawthorne.

Melville like Hawthorne had a decidedly detached attitude toward his surroundings. Both men were passive observers. Melville looked at the mass of men and its civilization; Hawthorne looked at the individual and his problem. They both



looked clear through man -- piercing hypocrisy. Melville saw things in wholes searching for the farthest reaching import of events; Hawthorne found the segments not always piecing them together to suit him.

Melville was an observer. Typee pictures the life of the aborigines in the Marquesas Islands. Melville lived there for three years never assuming the native habits. He became an inveterate observer. This fact is borne out in his numerous long romances which picture minutely and realistically the life of the South Sea islands. Although Melville lived among the primitives he was not like Whitman stirred by the advantages of living like them. Raymond Weaver noted that "While among them, he evinced a desire neither to adopt their ways, nor to change them."¹

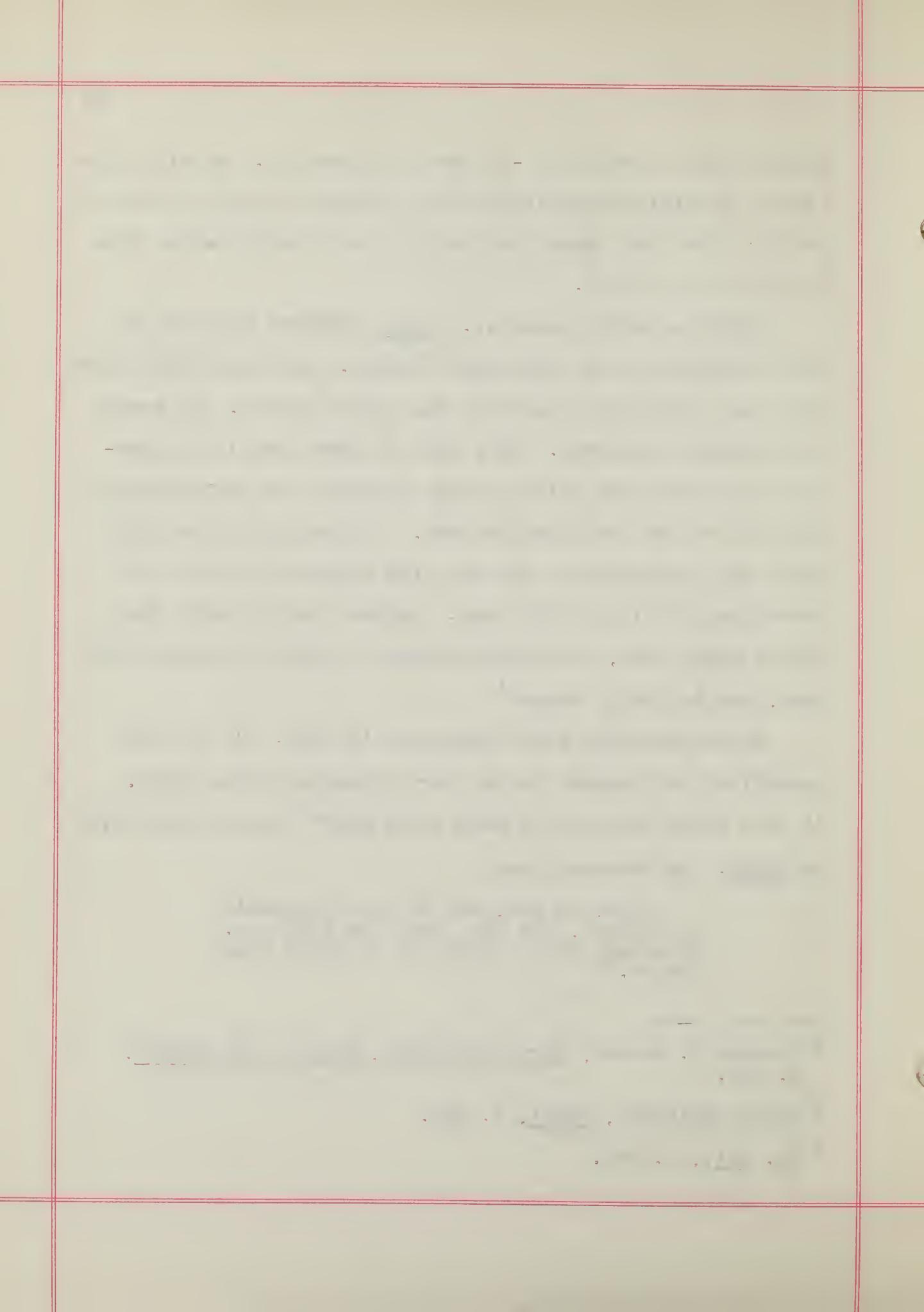
Herman Melville loved ships and the sea. To him they symbolized man opposed to the very elements of the world. "I have loved ships, as I have loved men"² were his own words in Mardi. He observed that

Now, at sea, and in the fellowship
of sailors, all men appear as they are.
No school like a ship for studying human
nature.³

¹ Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic, p. 211.

² Herman Melville, Mardi, p. 443.

³ Op. cit., p. 386.



He poked fun at conventional civilization: "And what's the use of being snivelized."⁴ This was forcefully brought to his attention in Honolulu.

Not until I visited Honolulu was I aware of the fact that the small remnant of the natives has been civilized into draught horses, . . . In a word, here, as in every case where Civilization has in any way been introduced among those whom we call savages, she has scattered her vices and withheld her blessings . . . I will frankly declare that after passing a few weeks in this valley of the Marquesas, I formed a higher estimate of human nature than I had ever before entertained.⁵

Lewis Mumford aptly described Melville's attitude toward his surroundings with a figure which he pursued through his biography of him.

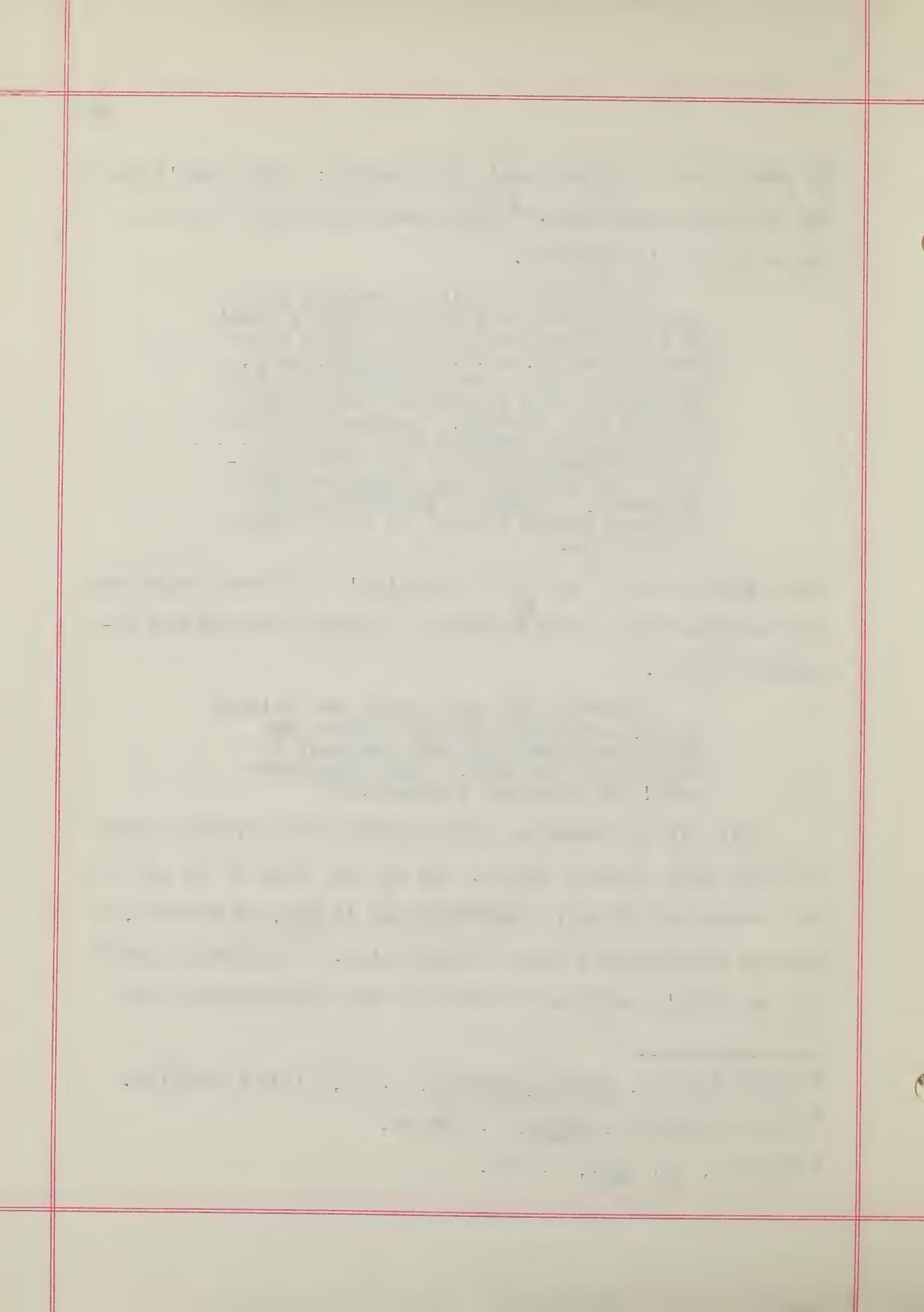
Melville was the sailor who climbed aloft, and knew that the captain was sometimes drunk and that the best of ships might go down. "All hands save ship! has startled dreamers."⁶

With all his detached air Melville still craved a deep intimacy with another spirit. He did not find it in any of the common run of man. Hawthorne was to him, by hearsay, a Puritan savoring too much of Puritanism. If anything would try Melville's patience it would be the superficiality of

⁴ Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, p. 48, citing Melville.

⁵ Herman Melville, Typee, p. 289 ff.

⁶ Mumford, op. cit., p. 141.

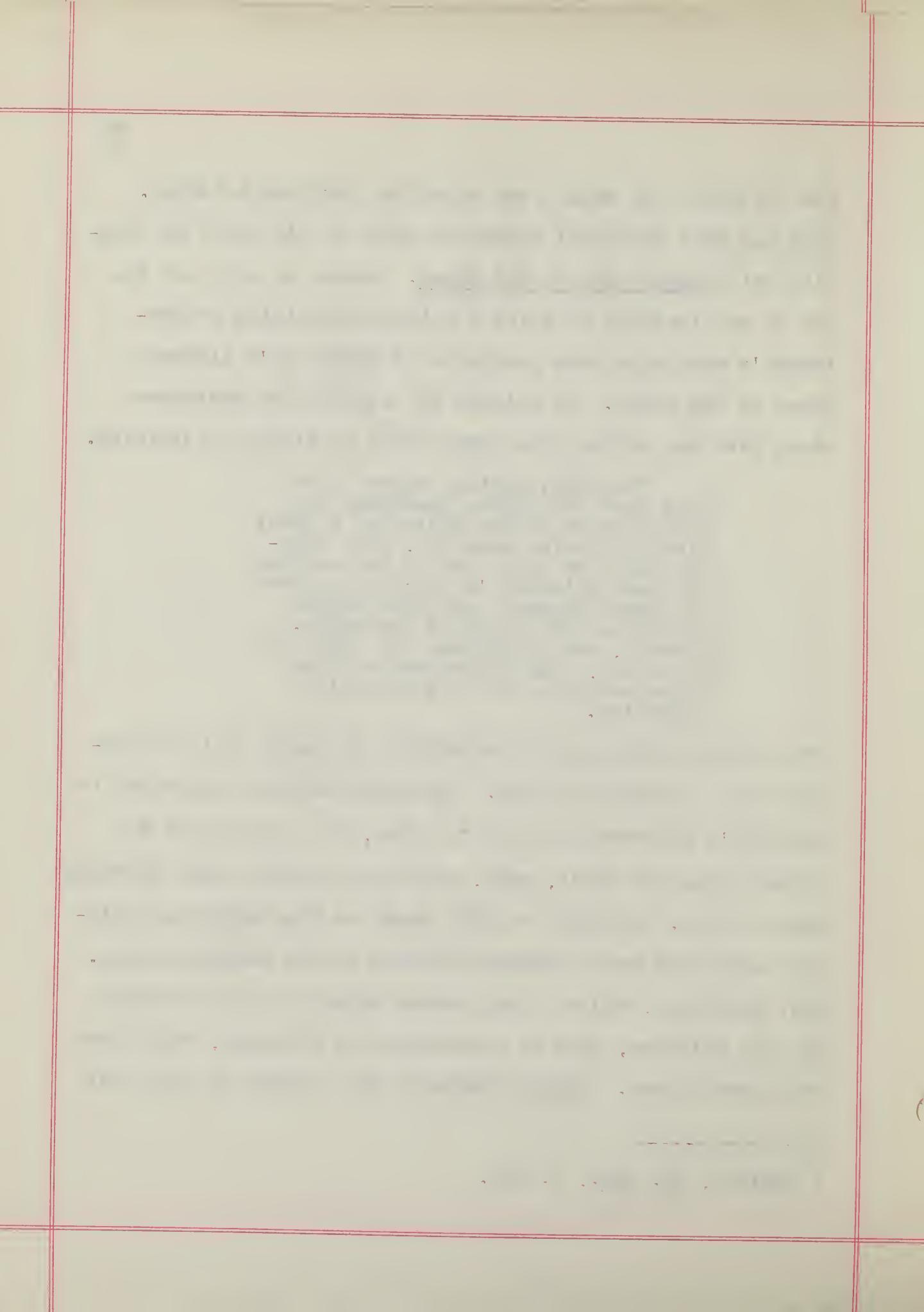


the religious and moral code which the Puritans embraced. This was what Nathaniel Hawthorne meant to him until he stumbled onto Mosses from an Old Manse. Before he ever met the man he was inspired to write a literary criticism of Hawthorne's work which was prophetic of Hawthorne's literary place in the world. He uttered the truth about Hawthorne along with one of the chief principles of literary criticism.

The great mistake seems to be that even with those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth's day; be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history or the tales of Boccaccio. Whereas, great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times and possess a corresponding colouring.⁷

After their meeting in a thunderstorm at Lenox their friendship took a reciprocal form. How much Hawthorne responded to Melville's overtures is hard to judge, but that he did was evident from the frank, open, startling letters which Melville wrote to him. Melville or "Mr. Omoo" as the Hawthorne children called him was a frequent visitor in the Hawthorne home. Mrs. Hawthorne, who at first looked askance at such company for her children, grew to appreciate his kindness, gentleness and mannerliness. Julian Hawthorne was reputed to have said

⁷ Mumford, op. cit., p. 190.



that he loved Mr. Melville as much as he loved his parents and sisters. Melville said of Hawthorne

A man of deep and noble nature has taken hold of me in this seclusion. His wild witch-voice rings through me; or, in softer cadences, I seem to hear it in the songs of the hillside birds that sing in the larch trees at my window.⁸

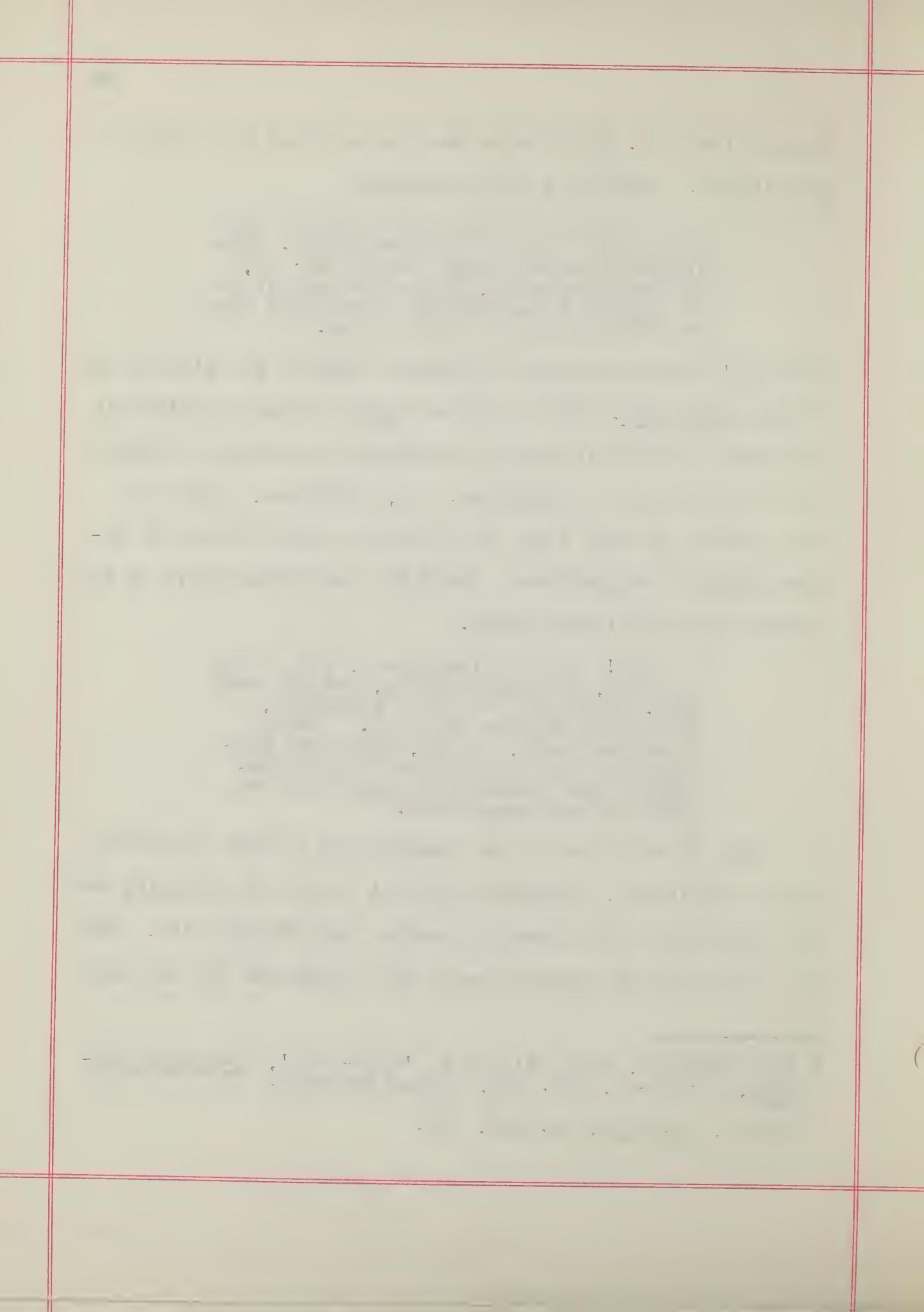
Melville's association with Hawthorne came at the time of his writing Moby Dick. His so-called "whale letters" written to Hawthorne during this interim disclosed the degree to which Melville confided in Hawthorne. He, doubtless, would not have written in such a way if he had not been certain of understanding from Hawthorne. Melville opened his heart to his friend in the following words.

Ah! it is a long stage, and no inn in sight, and night coming, and the body cold. But with you for a passenger, I am content and can be happy. I shall leave the world, I feel, with more satisfaction for having come to know you. Knowing you persuades me more than the Bible of our immortality.⁹

That Melville was to be disappointed in this friendship seemed inevitable. Hawthorne did not reveal the capacity for the questioning and reasoning depths that Melville did. The only two solutions possible were that Hawthorne did not care

⁸ Lewis Mumford, "The Writing of 'Moby-Dick,'" American Mercury, 15:482-90, Dec. '28, citing Melville.

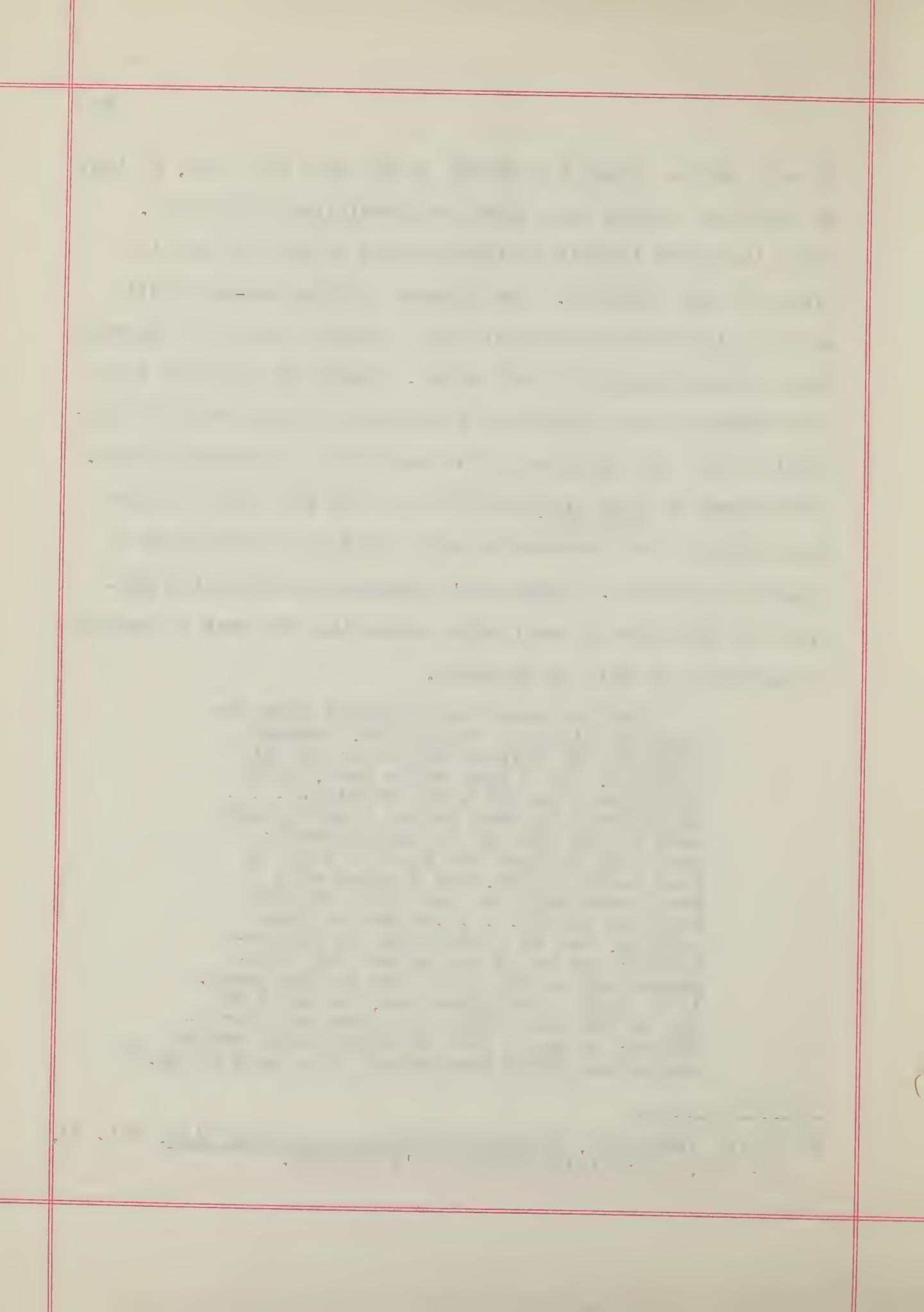
⁹ Weaver, op. cit., pp. 328, 329.



to have another plumb the depths of his woul with him, or that he could not follow the depths and mysticism of Melville. After the Lenox interim another meeting of the two men in Liverpool was recorded. The account of this two-day visit gave the impression of tension and a certain sense of frustration and suppression on both sides. Hawthorne may have been embarrassed by his failure to secure a consulate for Melville; Melville was disappointed in his search for a kindred spirit. Furthermore in Moby Dick Melville had put his soul on paper revealing his own frustration and a failure to arrive at a hopeful conclusion. Hawthorne's suggestion concerning Melville at this time is well worth pondering for what it reveals of Hawthorne as well as Melville.

(He) no doubt has suffered from too constant literary occupation, pursued without much success latterly; and his writings, for a long while past, have indicated a morbid state of mind. . . . He informed me that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated"; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation, and I think will never rest until he gets hold of some definite belief. . . . He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature and better worth immortality than most of us.¹⁰

¹⁰ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, Vol. II, pp. 134, 135; citing Hawthorne's journal.



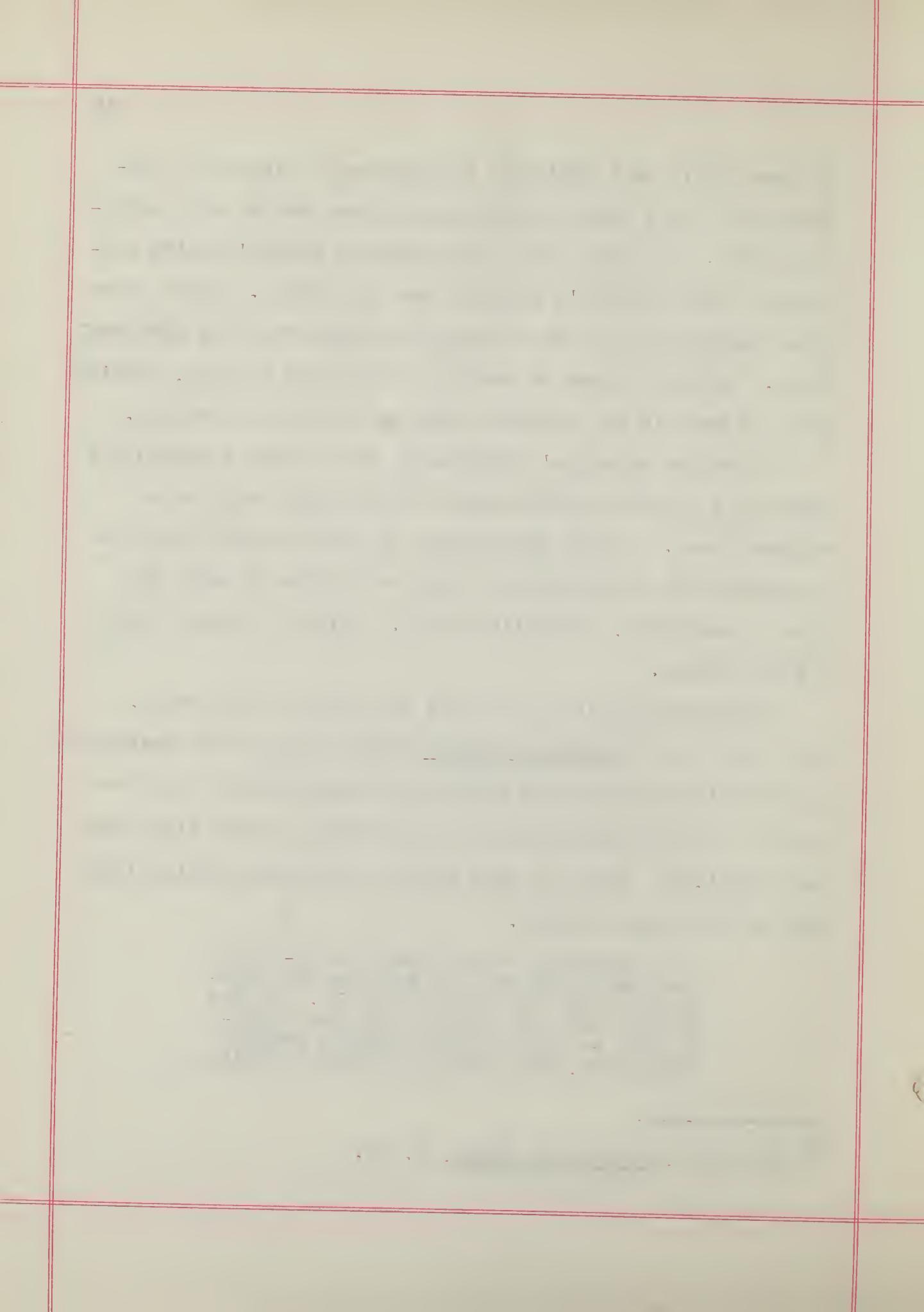
Did this imply that Hawthorne himself was a believer? Hawthorne well knew that Melville would never arrive at a definite belief. It would seem that Hawthorne couldn't quite comprehend that Melville's unbelief was his belief. Eight years later Hawthorne died never seeing Melville after the Liverpool visit. Melville lived on nearly another half century, drawing more and more in his thinking into the realm of unreality.

To define Melville's philosophy and to have a definition based on a careful consideration of his works would be a colossal task. A more superficial but safer method would be to present his philosophical ideas not trying to make them into a consistent, definitive whole. Melville himself never did the latter.

Transcendentalism never held any charm for Melville. Curl Vega in her Pasteboard Masks thought that "both Hawthorne and Melville had too much sound Yankee good sense to be involved in the Transcendental eccentricities of men like Bronson Alcott."¹¹ Melville made light of them for feeling that they were a chosen people.

Wherefore we see that the so-called Transcendentalists are not the only people who deal in transcendents. On the contrary we seem to see that the Utilitarians -- the everyday world's people themselves, far transcend those inferior

¹¹ Curl Vega, Pasteboard Masks, p. 11.



Transcendentalists by their own incomprehensible worldly maxims. And -- what is vastly more -- with the one party, their transcendentalists are but theoretic and inactive and therefore harmless; whereas with the other, they are actually clothed in living deeds.¹²

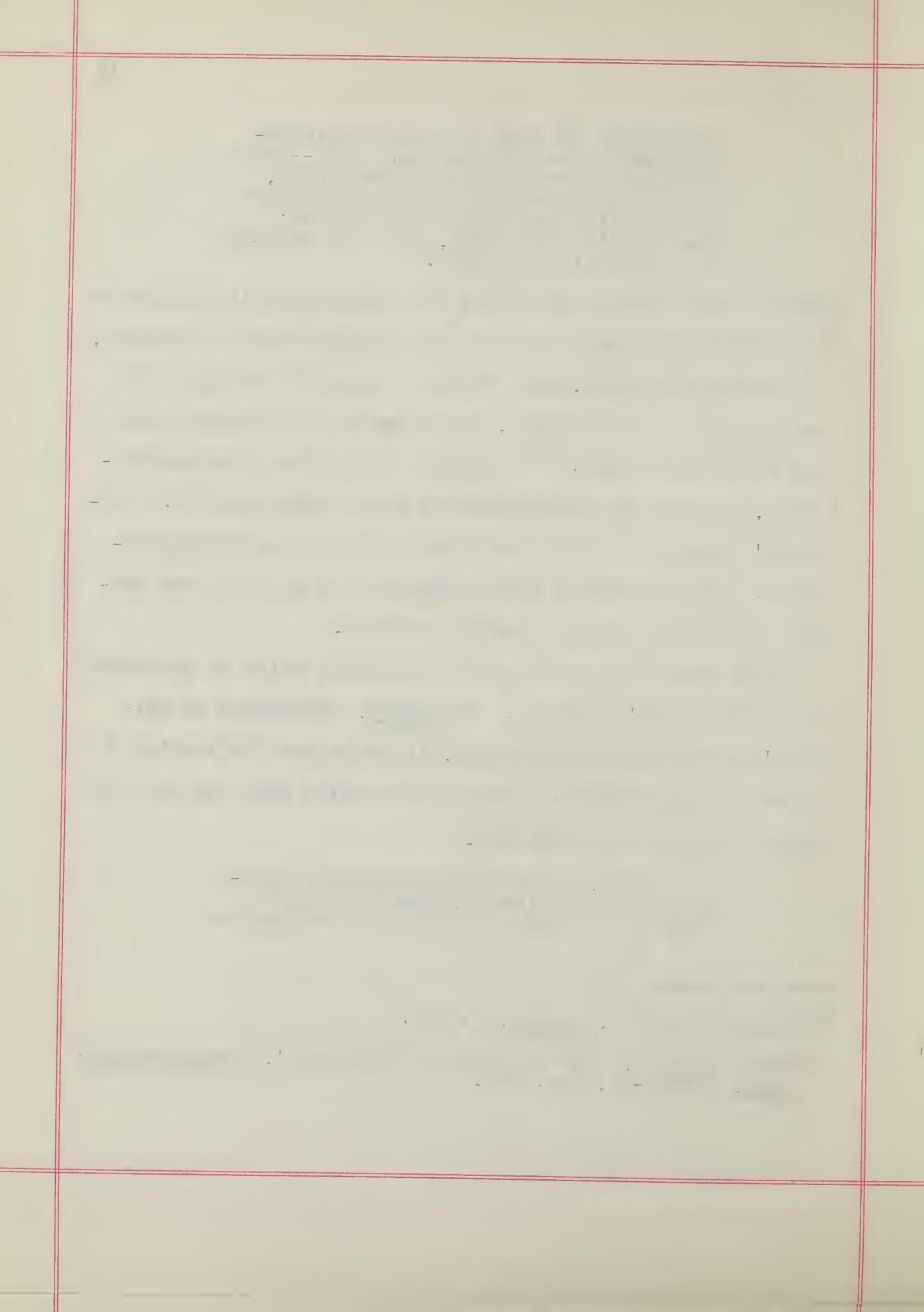
Mumford again came to the front here with Melville likened to the sailor who climbed aloft in contradistinction to Emerson, the transcendentalist, who "was the perpetual passenger who stayed below in bad weather, trusting that the captain would take care of the ship."¹³ Melville discredited transcendentalism, but not for the reason for which Hawthorne did. Hawthorne's doctrine of sin interfered with his becoming Emersonian. Melville still aloft preferred to make his own destiny rather than have it charted for him.

This leads up to a belief in fatalism which is scattered through Melville's writing. In Pierre, recognized as Melville's spiritual autobiography, the hero was the victim of forces outside himself. In spite of acting with the best of motives disaster overtook him.

Here, in imperfect inklings, tinglings, presentiments, Pierre began to feel . . . that not always in our actions

¹² Herman Melville, Pierre, p. 365.

¹³ Lewis Mumford, "The Writing of 'Moby-Dick,'" American Mercury, 15:482-90, Dec. '28.



are we own factors.¹⁴

Later Melville pictured Pierre again in a Thomas Hardy dilemma.

But Pierre was not arguing Fixed Fate and Free Will, now; Fixed Fate and Free Will were arguing him, and Fixed Fate got the better in the debate.¹⁵

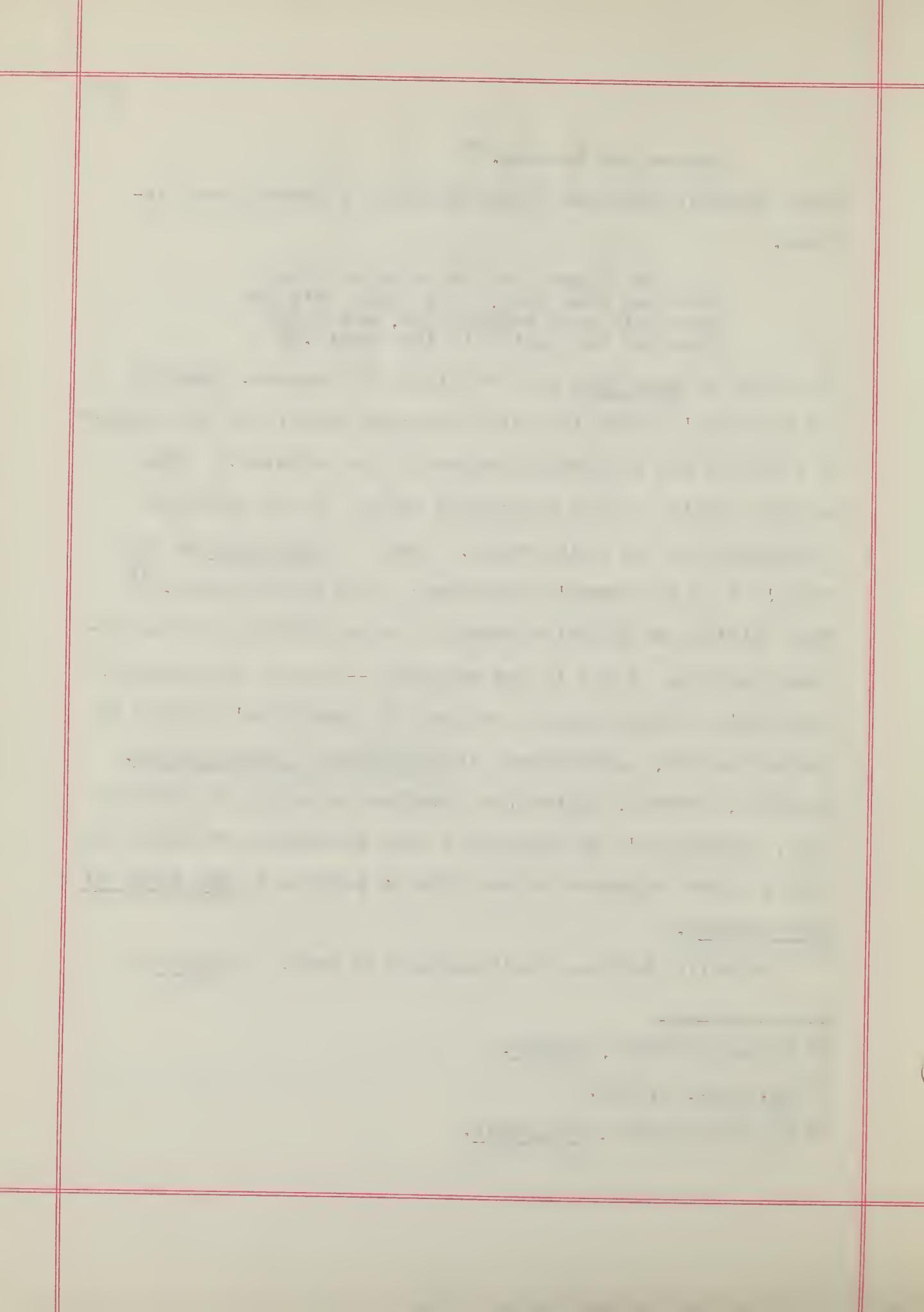
The theme of Moby Dick was fatalistic in essence. Mumford put Melville's theme into this form: "a parable on the mystery of evil and the accidental malice of the universe." Ahab was the victim of "the accidental malice of the universe" represented by the white whale. Again in Moby Dick we find "Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders."¹⁶ This attitude of Melville seems to be his solution to the ultimate outcome of man in the universe -- one of frustration. Melville's fatalism may be compared to Hawthorne's belief in predestination, particularly in The House of Seven Gables. Melville, however, allows his fatalism to result in frustration. Hawthorne's attitude of a calm acceptance of things as they are was reflected in his life as well as in The House of Seven Gables.

Melville felt the fruitlessness of work. In Mardi a

¹⁴ Herman Melville, Pierre.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 254.

¹⁶ Herman Melville, Moby Dick.



tenant farmer said to Babbalanja "Alas, masters, this grain is not mine; I plough, I sow, I reap, I bind, I stack, -- Lord Prime garners." In a letter to his cousin Catherine Gansevoort Melville attacked work.

The talk of the dignity of work. Bosh. True, Work is the necessity of poor humanity's earthly condition. The dignity is in leisure. Besides, 99 hundredth of all the work done in the world is either foolish and unnecessary, or harmful and wicked.¹⁷

This idea was strengthened by Melville's experiences in the South Sea islands. No one knew the drudgery of work there. All necessary work had its immediate compensation. No fortunes were amassed.

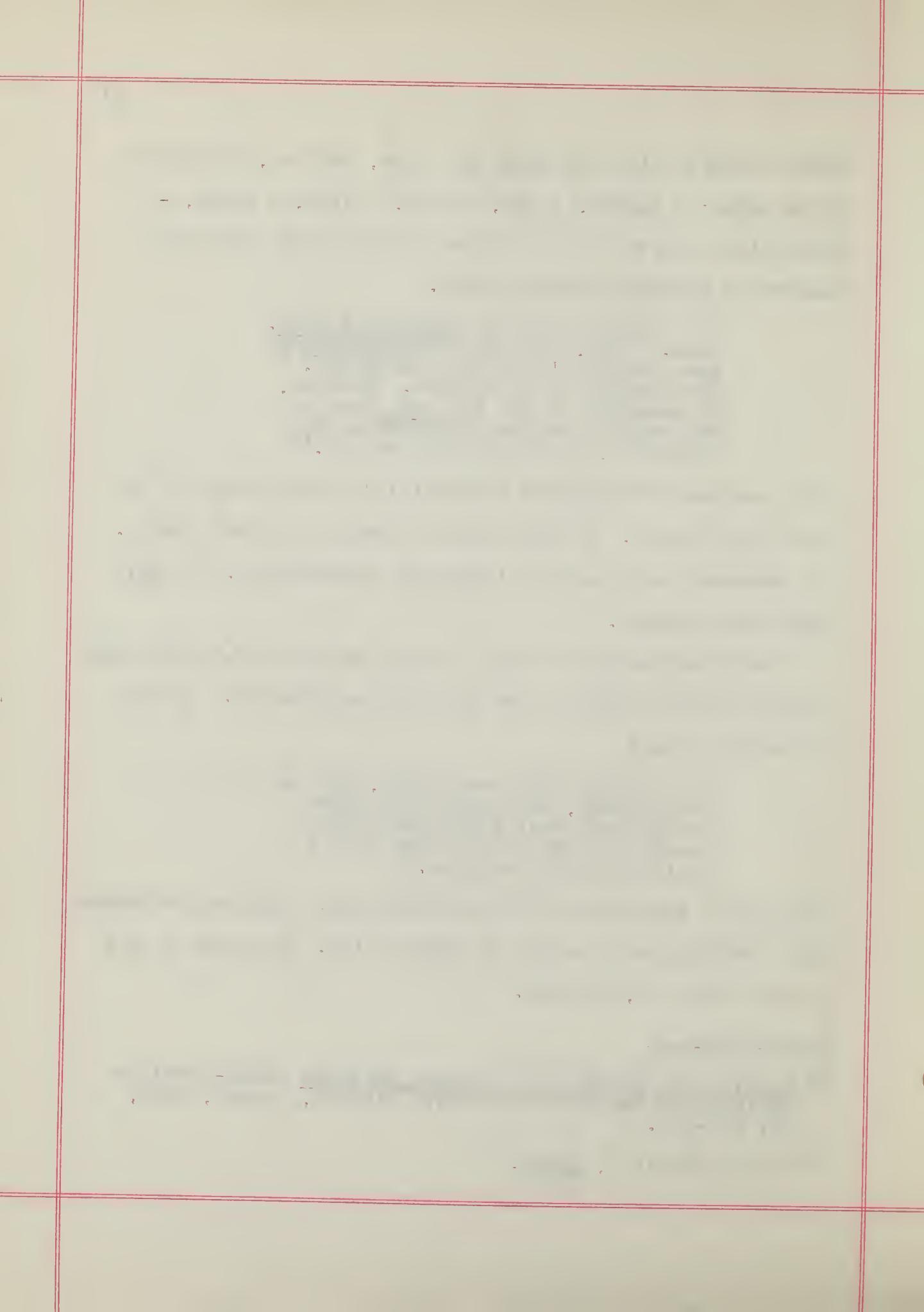
The inhabitants of these islands proved to Melville that goodness existed outside the pale of Christianity. To him the natives dealt

more kindly with each other, and are more humane, than many who repeat every night that beautiful prayer breathed first by the lips of the divine and gentle Jesus.¹⁸

Religion to Melville was not Christianity. His only religious claim was that of a belief in immortality. It could be God or gods with him, or Fate.

¹⁷ Family Correspondence of Herman Melville (1830-1904) in Bulletin of The New York Public Library, August, 1929, pp. 575-625.

¹⁸ Herman Melville, Typee.



The quest for truth might be called Melville's religion. He was fully aware of the limitations of such a search as these words signified.

and we learn that it is not for man
to follow the trail of truth too far,
since by so doing he entirely loses
the directing compass of his mind.¹⁹

It would almost seem that the last thirty years of Melville's life were a testimony to this fact. Yet he justified himself in Pierre with a later remark.

But it is through the malice of
this earthly air, that only by being
guilty of Folly does mortal man in many
cases arrive at the perception of Sense.²⁰

These words summed up the effect of Melville's theory.

The greatest marvels are first truths;
and first truths the last unto which we
attain . . . And it is only of our easy
faith, that we are not infidels through-
out; and only of our lack of faith, that
we believe what we do.²¹

Point Hope to the West is "Unattainable forever; but forever leading to great things this side thyself."²²

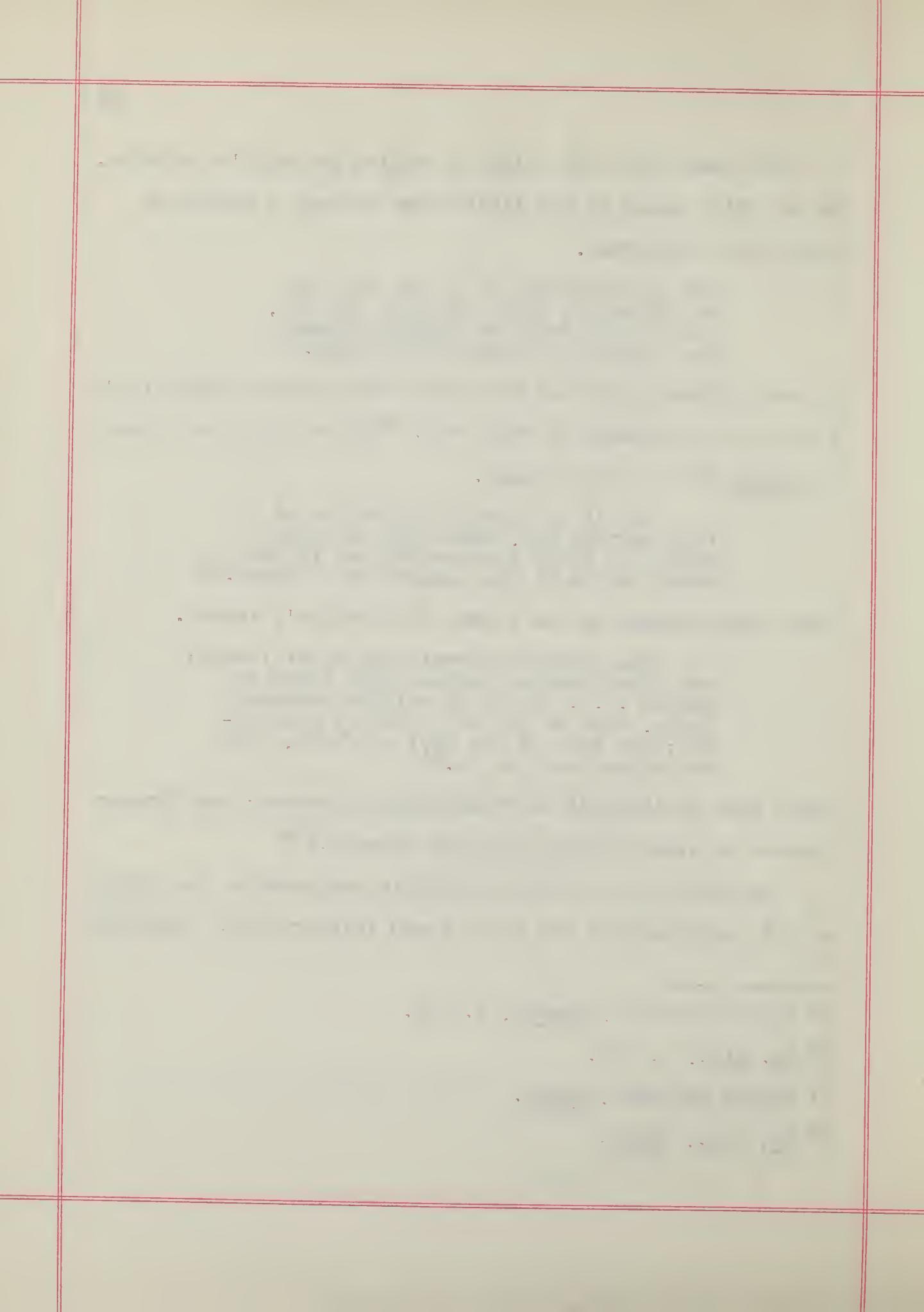
Melville had no easily definable philosophy. He looked at life unprejudiced and did his own interpreting. Hawthorne

¹⁹ Herman Melville, Pierre, p. 231.

²⁰ Op. cit., p. 233.

²¹ Herman Melville, Mardi.

²² Op. cit., Mardi.

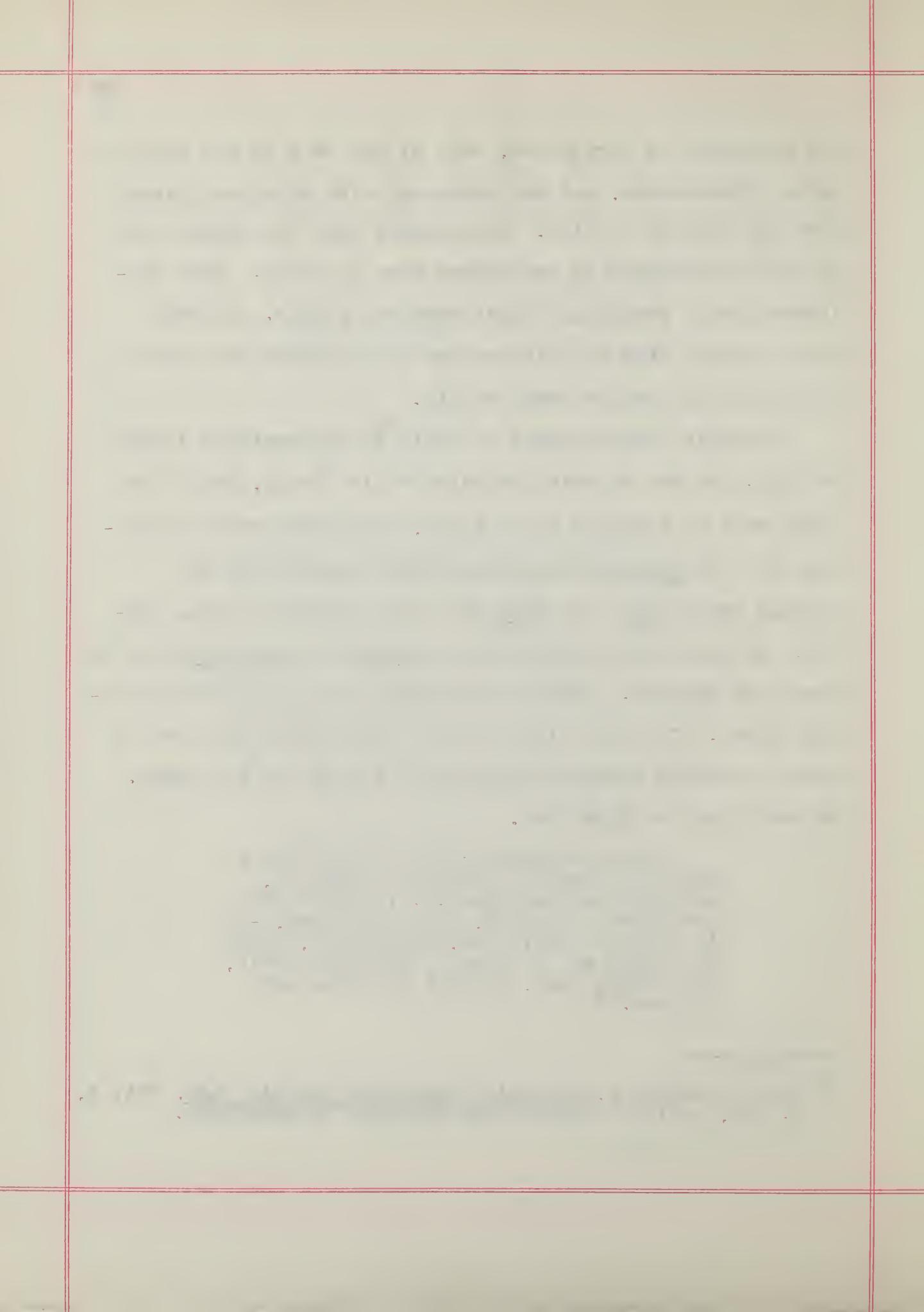


was sceptical of Puritanism, sure of the fact of sin and its moral consequences, and not concerned with going any deeper into the purpose of life. He accepted life and taught that sin was recompensed by punishment here on earth. This punishment had a purifying effect upon the sinner. Melville gave evidence that he felt man was not to blame for what befell him. He made no room for sin.

Melville found himself a victim of circumstance in his writing. He had to write to support his family, but if he wrote what he believed to be truth, the public would not accept it. In Pierre he waxed satirical showing how his poorest works Typee and Omoo were best received by the public. He spoke his convictions in Mardi and Moby Dick only to have them spurned. Melville purported not to care about popular favor. In later life it would appear that he chose to write no longer because there was no market for his books. He wrote thus to Hawthorne.

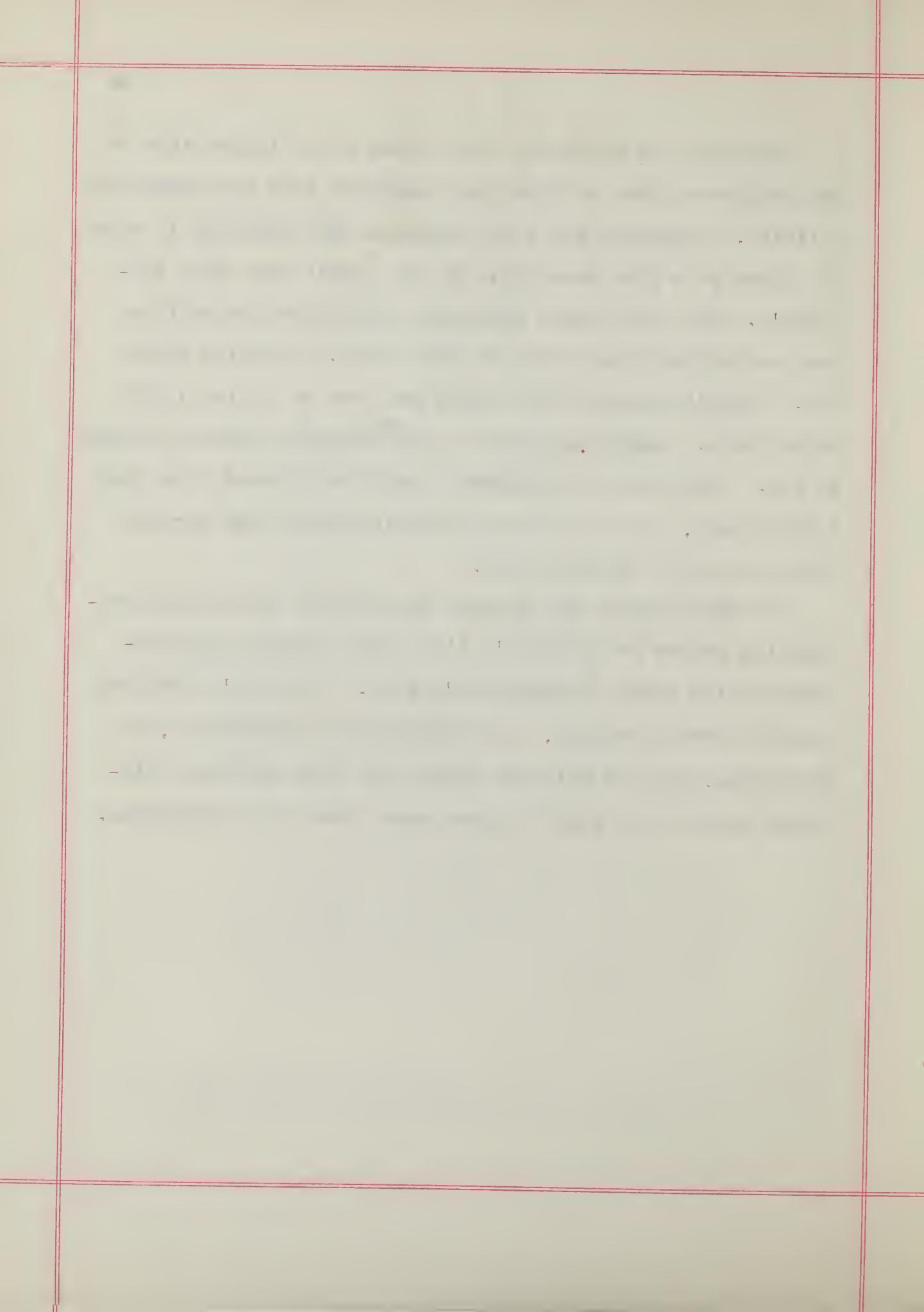
Dollars damn me; and the malicious Devil is forever grinning in upon me, holding the door ajar . . . What I feel most moved to write, that is banned, -- it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product, is a final hash, and all my books are botches.²³

23 Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, Vol. I., p. 402, citing a letter from Melville to Hawthorne.



Melville and Hawthorne both wanted to be independent of the public and both of them were dependent upon the public for a living. Hawthorne was more fortunate than Melville in that his ideas were more acceptable to the public than were Melville's. For this reason Hawthorne could continue writing what he felt was the truth and still live. Melville could not. Melville became discouraged and gave up trying in his latter days. Hawthorne picked a psychological moment in which to die. Doubtless his popularity would have waned if he had lived longer, for he had done his best writing and already showed signs of lessening art.

In this chapter the attempt has been to portray the outstanding points in Melville's life which compared and contrasted with those in Hawthorne's life. Melville's detached attitude toward mankind, his friendship with Hawthorne, his philosophy, and his attitude toward his work have been discussed with an eye open to these same facts about Hawthorne.

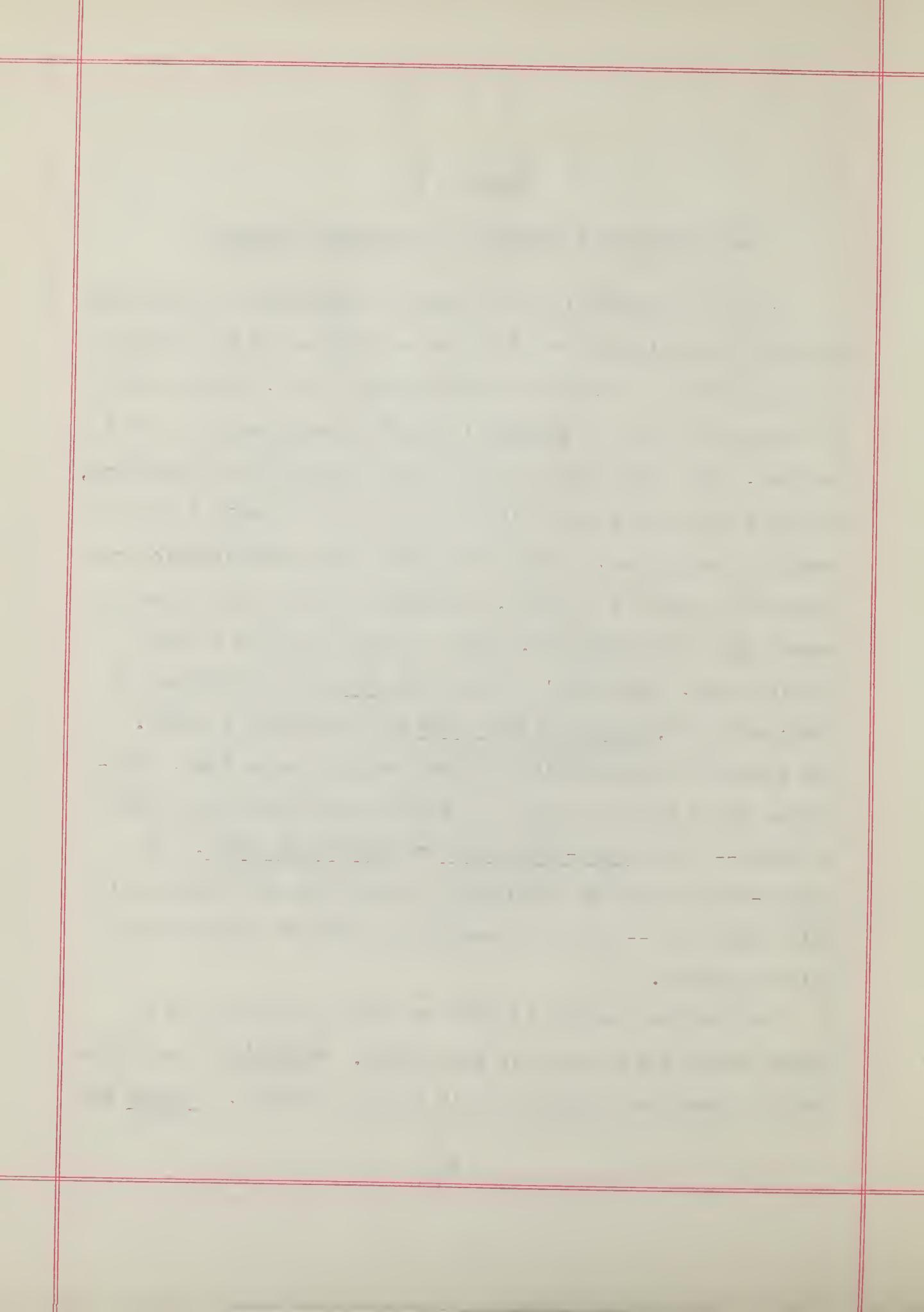


CHAPTER V

THE WORKS OF HAWTHORNE AND MELVILLE COMPARED

Up to this point the discussion of Hawthorne and Melville has been a consideration of the personalities of the two men and the effect of outside influences upon them. The purpose of this chapter is to compare the art and workmanship of the two men. This study will not be void of personality problems, for no writer can create without projecting himself into his work to some degree. Both of the men under consideration put themselves into their books. Melville did this to a greater extent than did Hawthorne. Each of these men had a short writing span. Melville's first book Typee was published in 1846; his last, The Confidence-Man was published in 1857. His period of productivity was only eleven years long. Hawthorne had a longer period of creation continuing from 1837 to 1860 -- from Twice-Told Tales to The Marble Faun. In twenty-three years he published no more than did Melville in half that time -- this is speaking in terms of quantity not literary worth.

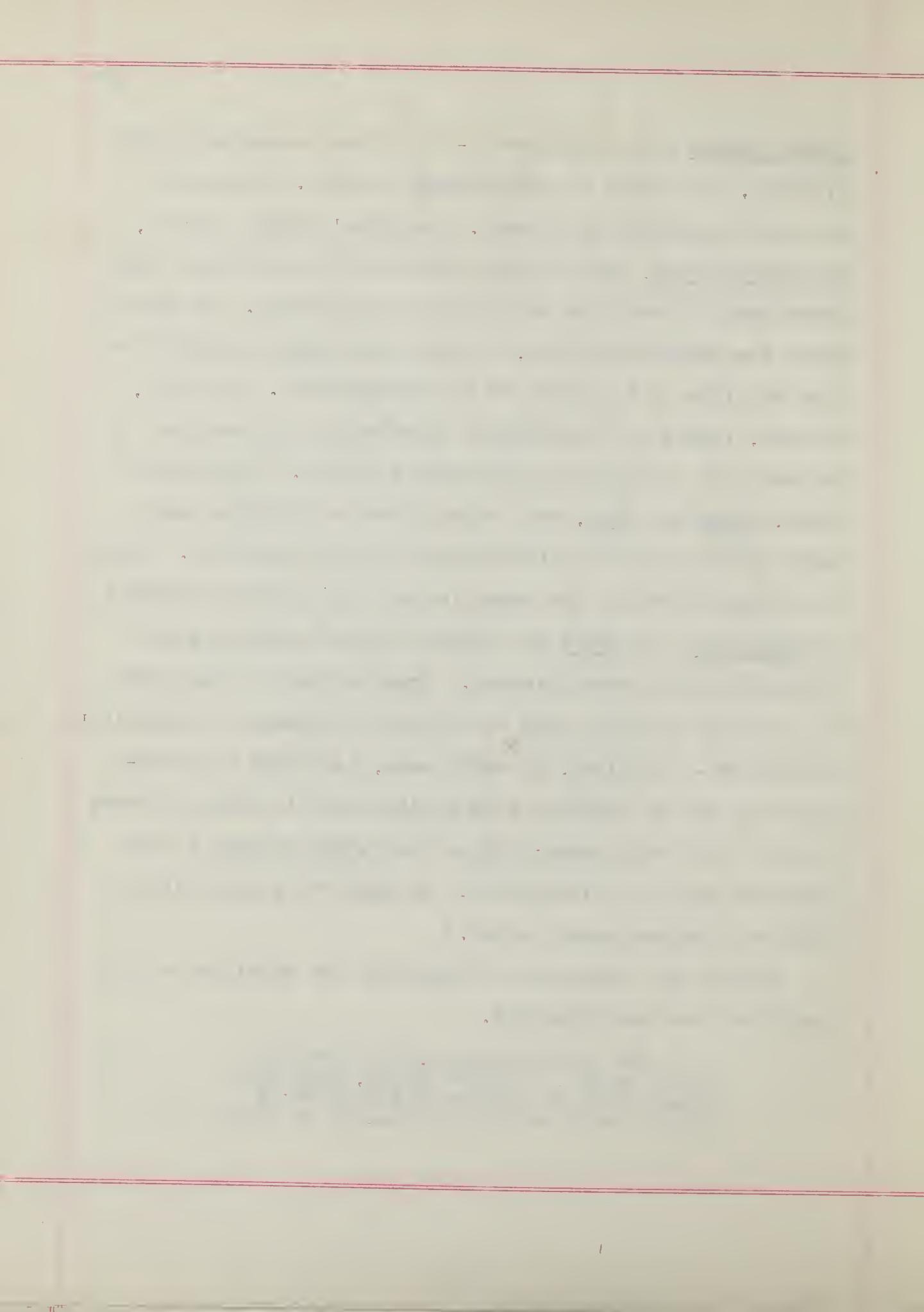
The subject matter of each of these novelists had a locale which was typical of its author. Melville chose ships and the South Sea islands as his scene of action. Pierre and



Israel Potter were exceptions -- the former concerned a love triangle, the latter a revolutionary soldier. Neither of them was successful as a novel. Melville's short stories, The Piazza Tales, were chiefly character studies except "The Encantadas" in which he reverted to more islands. No matter where the physical setting, it was almost always possible to find Melville in the realm of the metaphysical. Melville, the man, lacked an intellectual poise which lack resulted in his abstract treatment of his subject matter. His earlier books, Typee and Omoo, were pure narrative revealing what their author could do with straight forward narrative. There is a balance between the narrative and the abstract elements of Moby Dick. In Mardi the abstract phase outweighed and overshadowed the story element. This tendency to deal with the abstract in his novels was a direct outgrowth of Melville's personality. He liked, it would seem, to remove his characters as far as possible from civilization in order to study them as they really were; not as they might measure by the yardstick used in civilization. He said "No school like a ship for studying human nature."

Useful for comparison of Hawthorne and Melville is this quotation from Lewis Mumford.

The Scarlet Letter, The House of Seven Gables, William Wilson, like most other works of fiction are melodic; a single instrument is sufficient to carry



the whole theme; whereas *Moby-dick* is a symphony; every resource of language and thought, fantasy, description, philosophy, natural history, drama, broken rhythms, blank verse, imagery, symbol, are utilized to sustain and expand the great theme.¹

Hawthorne chose New England as his place of action. His exceptions to this were The Marble Faun and his children's stories. Many of his settings were in the vicinity of Greater Boston. Hawthorne generally dealt with actual character struggles rather than deviating from the physical to unreality. He, as the preceding quotation reveals, played ^{an} easily recognizable melody -- the attempt at harmony was minor.

The subject matter in Hawthorne's novels was treated impersonally. The objectivity in his works gave them a calm poise which was the result of Hawthorne's more poised outlook on life. He was more sure of himself than was Melville. This quality lent a note of authority which made his books concise and logical, which is markedly so in his stringent picturing of detail in The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne was not a habitual dreamer like his contemporary, Melville. What excursions he took into the land of fancy were always tied down to reality through his use of symbolism. The ideas which he wanted to present, no matter how abstract or remote, were clothed in such reality or concreteness as not to be mistaken. "The Hall

¹ Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, p. 182.



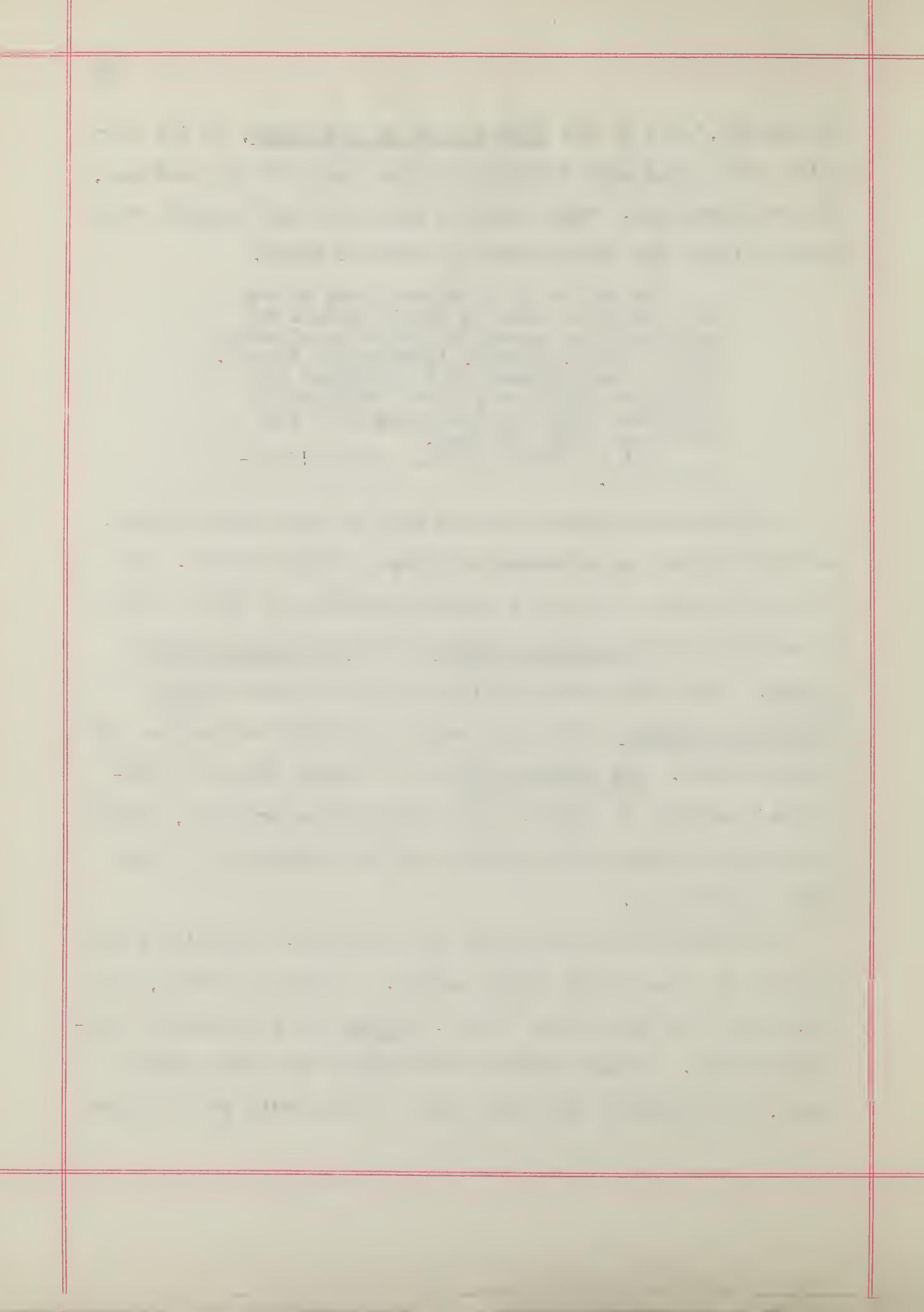
of Fantasy," one of the Mosses from an Old Manse, by its very title would lead most writers into the realm of the abstract, but not Hawthorne. What could be more real and tangible than Father Miller who represented an abstract dogma.

He led me to a distant part of the hall where a crowd of deeply attentive auditors were assembled round an elderly man of plain, honest, trustworthy aspect. With an earnestness that betokened the sincerest faith in his own doctrine he announced that the destruction of the world was close at hand.

"It is Father Miller himself!" exclaimed I.

In his novels Hawthorne knew what he was talking about. He had firsthand acquaintance with his subject matter. His Puritan heritage gave him a direct knowledge of what he had to deal with in The Scarlet Letter and The House of Seven Gables. His Brook Farm experience gave him much in The Blithedale Romance though the latter must not be mistaken for autobiography. The Marble Faun was a direct result of Hawthorne's sojourn in Italy. He maintained an artistic, subtle relationship between the setting and the characters in the novels cited here.

The methods of the two men vary greatly. Melville wrote much of the time in the first person. He took no notes, simply writing as ideas came to him. Typee was confessedly autobiographical. It was written from memory not from actual facts, but composed (Melville said) of the facts as he remem-



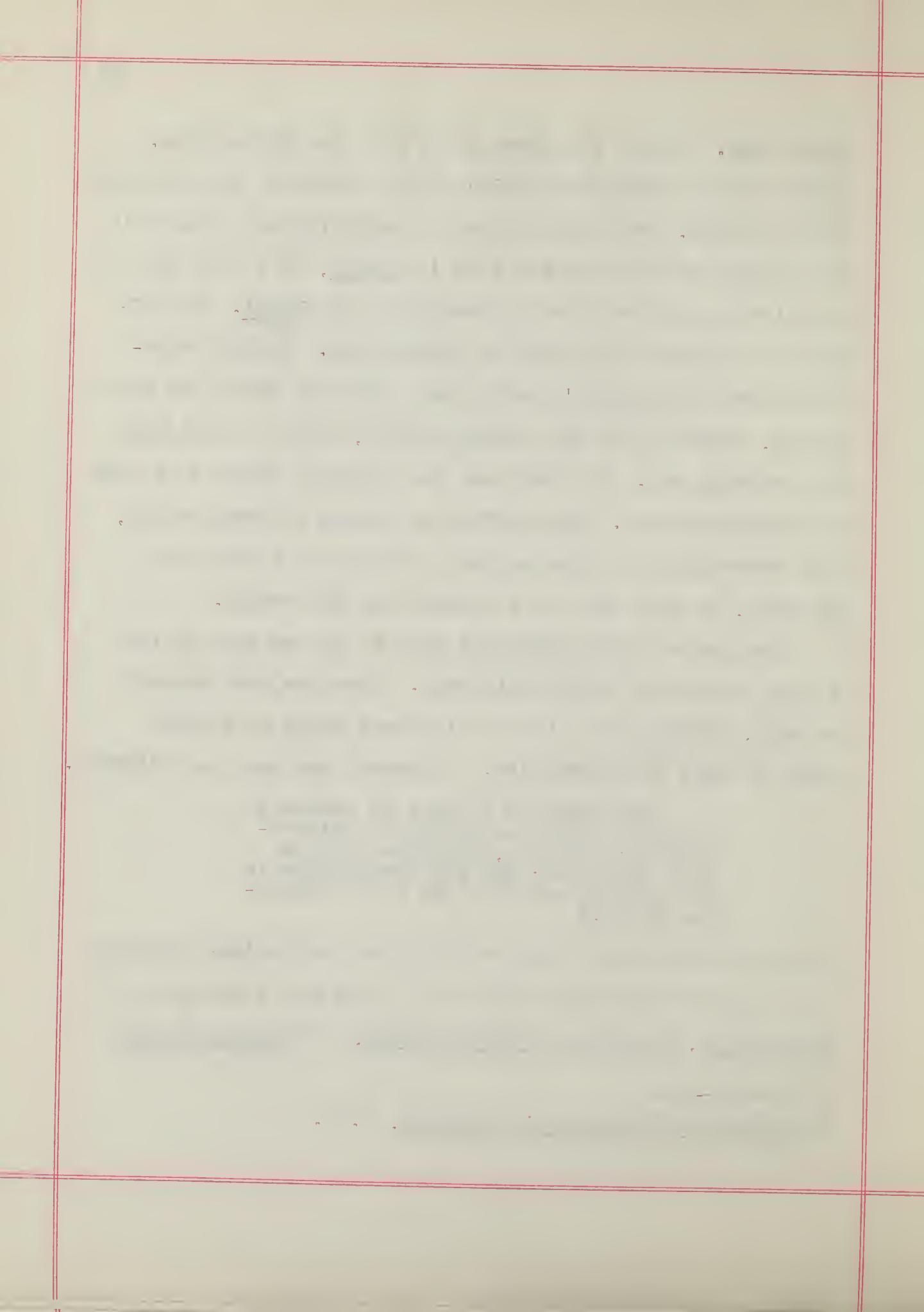
bered them. He was perplexed about life and its meaning. Since he was a subjective writer this perplexity was mirrored in his novels. This reflection of perplexity may be seen in the actions of his characters as in Pierre, or in the lack of organization and vagueness of meaning as in Mardi. The effect is to leave the reader in uncertainty. Another characteristic of Melville's novels was the great number of characters, around which the others pivoted, with no particular one standing out. He also made the physical elements as real as people would be. This effect he obtained through vivid, keen description. There was much of beauty in nature to Melville, so that much of it crept into his novels.

The method which Hawthorne used in his writing he left for us to examine in his notebooks. These he kept wherever he went, jotting down items of interest which he thought could be used in his stories. A typical one was the following.

The scene of a story or sketch to be laid within the light of a street-lantern; the time, when the lamp is near going out; and the catastrophe to be simultaneous with the last flickering gleam.²

They were filled with plot or character suggestions sketched in a fashion similar to this one. The actual background in Ethan Brand, The House of Seven Gables, and The Blithedale

² The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals, p. 5.



Romance was taken from the notebooks. Hawthorne in contrast to Melville majored in character study and soul struggle using only a few well-delineated characters. There was a restraint in Hawthorne's method which lent power to his work.

Hawthorne ascribed to himself a certain airiness.

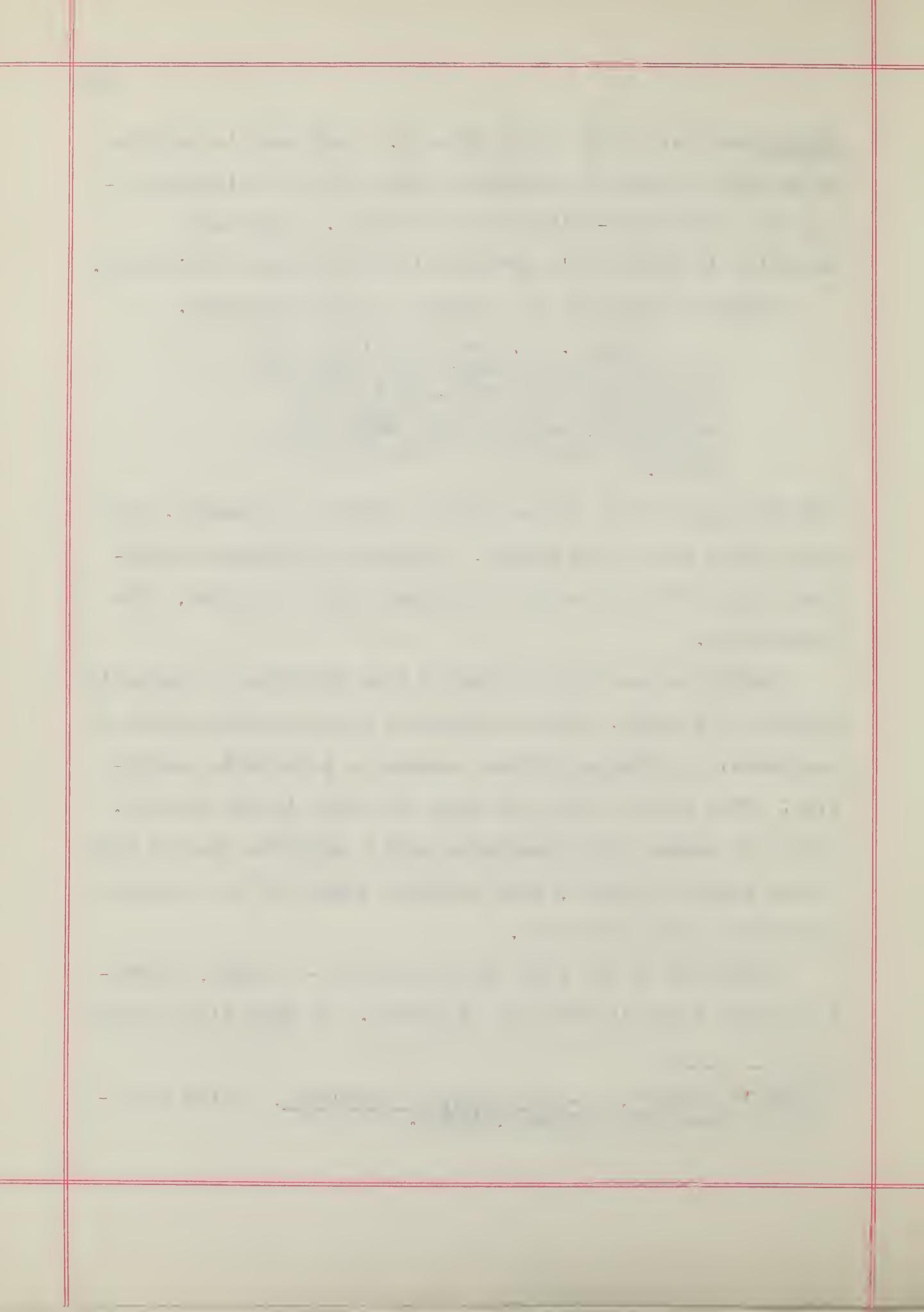
I have . . . great difficulty in the lack of materials; for I have seen so little of the world, that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of, and it is not easy to give life-like semblance to such shadowy stuff.³

This was perceptible in his shorter stories and essays. His major works were quite earthy. Apparently Hawthorne recognized his difficulty early and worked with it in mind, thus avoiding it.

Hawthorne was better adjusted than Melville to the social customs of his day. This resulted in a more unified theme in his books. He thought things through to a definite conclusion. This unity in the man made for unity in his writing. With this mental poise Hawthorne kept a definite goal in mind toward which he worked, thus avoiding going off on a tangent as Melville was wont to do.

Hawthorne in his style was Puritanic -- frugal, conventional and rigid in sentence structure. He used his words as

³ Randall Stewart, ed. The American Notebooks, citing a letter to Longfellow (June 4, 1837).



an effective means of advancing the plot or of creating a sensory or emotional impression. By this is meant that he did not waste words. Every description had a pertinence to the plot even if it was only to create atmosphere. Hawthorne's novels were very simple in structure especially in The Scarlet Letter and in The House of Seven Gables. The actual plot amounted to no more than that of a short story. To lengthen his plots to novel proportions Hawthorne did not just idly use words. Every paragraph had a distinct mission. Since Hawthorne's emphasis was upon character rather than action, words which were not directly forwarding the thread of narrative were essential to a true development of character.

This may be noted in these words taken from The Scarlet Letter.

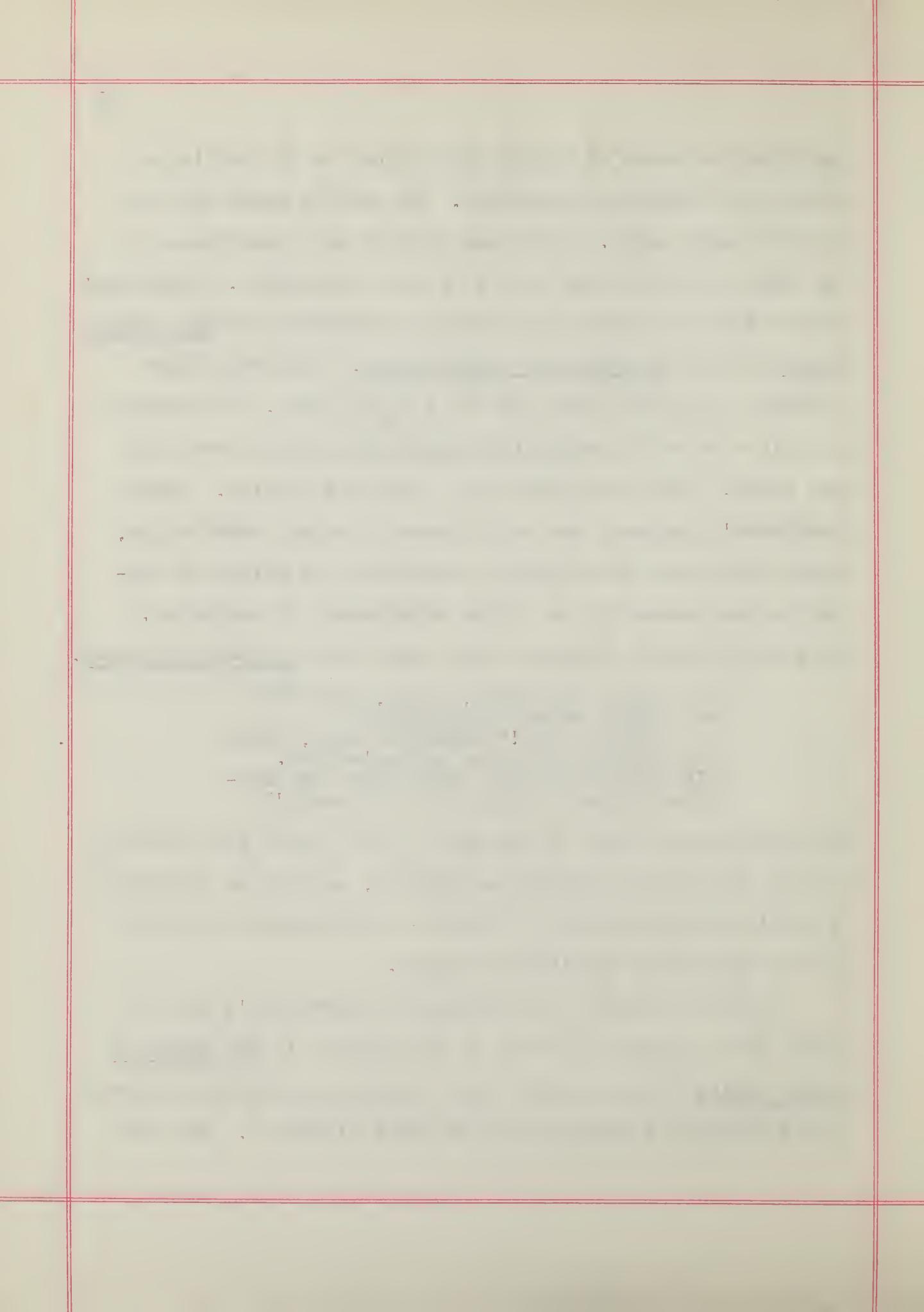
"Dost thou know, child, wherefore thy mother wears this letter?"

"Truly do I!" answered Pearl, looking brightly into her mother's face.

"It is for the same reason that the minister keeps his hand over his heart!"

Here Hawthorne called to the mind of the reader the relation of the sins of the minister and Hester, as well as revealing a telling characteristic of Pearl -- her uncanny perception of the underlying meanings of things.

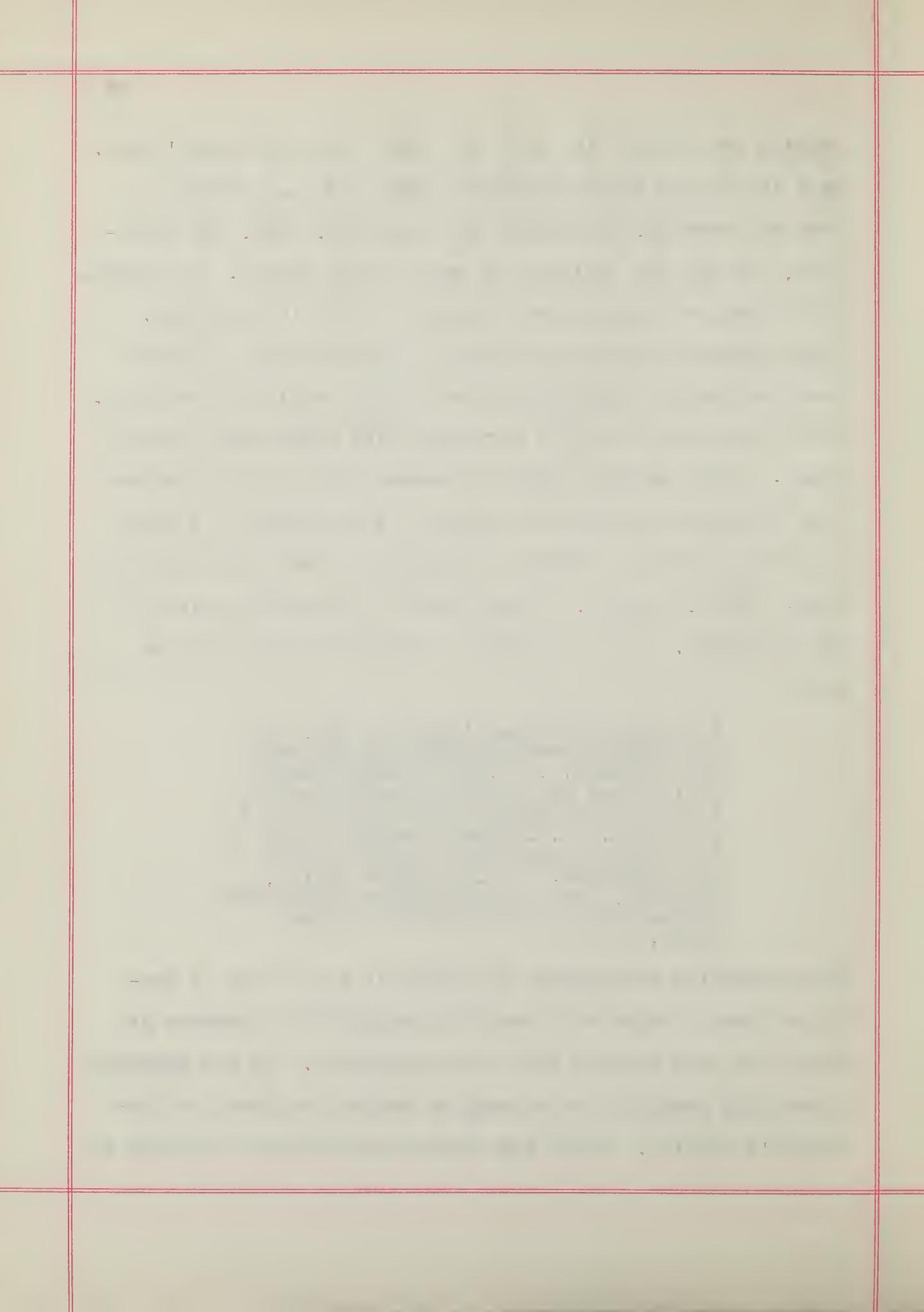
Another admirable illustration of Hawthorne's use of words for a purpose is found in the chapter in The House of Seven Gables which pictured Judge Pyncheon sitting in a chair not shifting his position as his watch ticked on. Yet this



chapter was filled with more than just words for words' sake. Here the reader learned that the Judge had real estate in town and country, had shares in a railroad, bank, and insurance, and was the recipient of many public honors. An outline of the day as the Judge had planned to live it was given. Judge Pyncheon was to have been at a dinner where he would have been made a candidate to run for the office of governor. Then night came on with a northwest wind which swept the sky clear. These details have been amassed for no other purpose than to show how Hawthorne managed a description of a dead man so as to give a definite impression of what his life had been. Night, however, brought with it a fantastic scene of the ancestors. This apparently troubled Hawthorne for he said

Indulging our fancy in this freak, we have partly lost the power of restraint and guidance. . . . The fantastic scene just hinted at must by no means be considered as forming an actual portion of our story. . . . We were betrayed into this brief extravagance by the quiver of the moonbeams. . . . We needed relief, moreover, from our too long and exclusive contemplation of that figure in the chair.

This quotation strengthens the argument that words to Hawthorne were a means to an end by showing his reluctance at even this mere dipping into the unnecessary. As was suggested above this frugality or economy of words gave power to Hawthorne's writing. Every description for him had a purpose in



the plot.

How different was Melville with his luxuriance of words -- humberless marvelous descriptions. His writing was filled with a wealth of sensory pictures, many of which had no connection at all with the plot. The grandeur of the ocean and the verdant isles of the South Seas with their inhabitants who lived in idyllic tranquillity give rise to much poetic prose. In fact Percy Boynton has taken a whole paragraph from Moby Dick and transposed it into excellent free verse.⁴ The following description is typical of Melville.

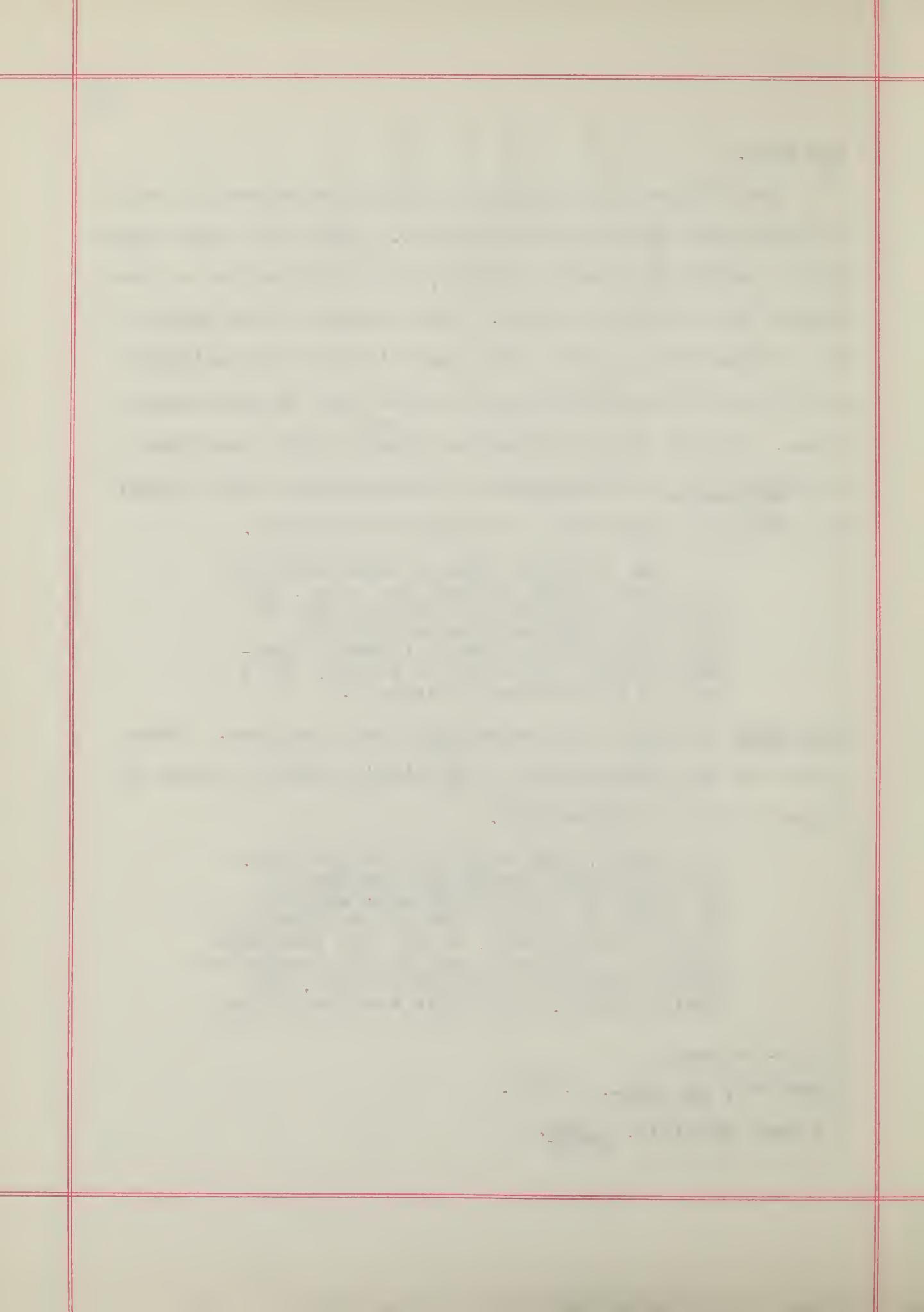
Two or three times I endeavoured to insinuate myself between the canes, and by dint of coaxing and bending them to make some progress; but a bull-frog might as well have tried to work a passage through the teeth of a comb, and I gave up the attempt in despair.⁵

Moby Dick is filled with magnificent word pictures. These words are one illustration of Melville's unusual figures of speech and word combinations.

Aloft, like a royal czar and king, the sun seemed giving this gentle air to this bold and rolling sea; even as the bride to groom. And at the girdling line of the horizon, a soft and tremulous motion -- most seen here at the Equator -- denoted the fond, throbbing trust, the loving alarms, with which the poor bride

⁴ Mumford, op. cit., p. 181.

⁵ Herman Melville, Typee.



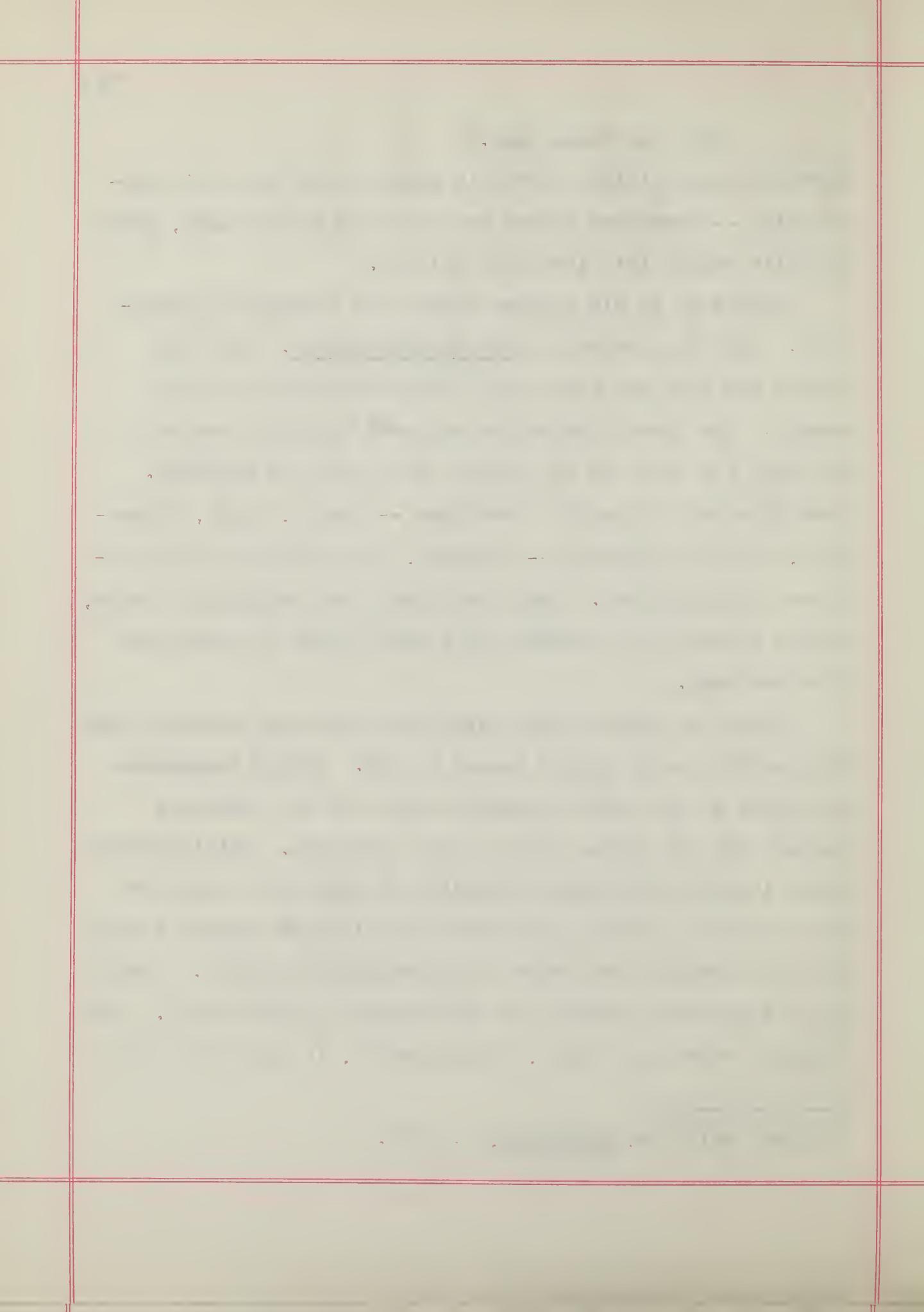
gave her bosom away.⁶

Hawthorne and Melville differ in style as the men do in personality -- Hawthorne stayed reasonably close to earth, while Melville soared into invisible heights.

Hawthorne in his writing strove for structural perfection. This he attained in The Scarlet Letter. The book leaves one with the sense that events took place as they should. The three outstanding and most important scenes in the book are those at the market place upon the scaffold. Each time the four major characters -- Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth -- appeared, but each time under different circumstances. Their souls had been undergoing change, either stretching to deeper and higher things or shriveling into hardness.

First the reader finds Hester with her baby standing upon the scaffold as an object lesson to all. Arthur Dimmesdale was there in the role of minister with all the customary respect for his office given by the onlookers. Chillingworth slunk into the background absorbing as much as he could of the situation. Seven years later the minister seeking a rest for his tormented soul went to the scaffold at night. Hester and little Pearl happened by and the three joined hands. The minister spied his doctor, Chillingworth, in the edge of the

⁶ Herman Melville, Moby Dick, p. 1082.

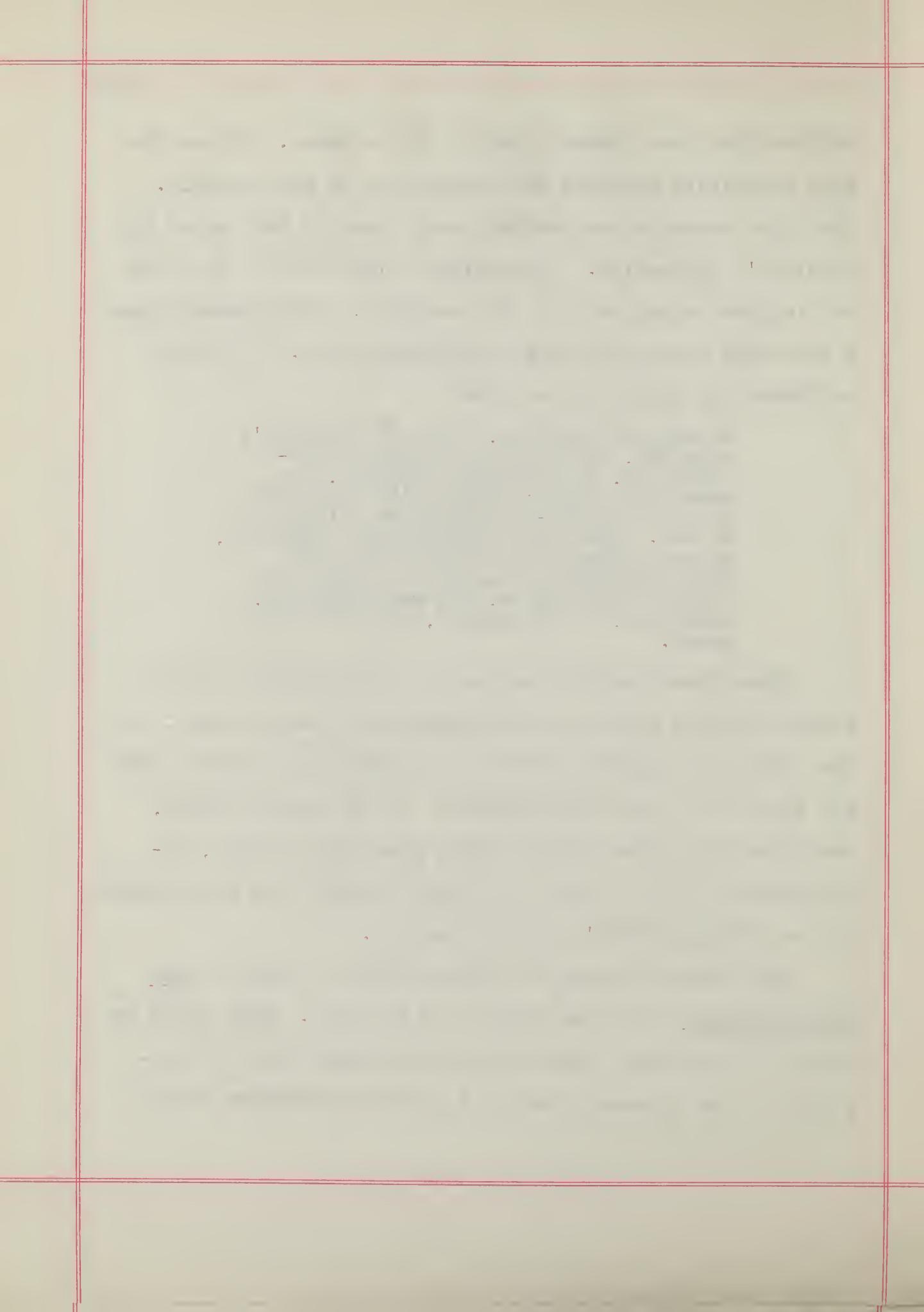


darkness his eyes gleaming out of the darkness. And so the same characters appeared the second time at the scaffold. The third scene at the scaffold took place on the day of the governor's procession. The minister broke out of the crowd and led Hester and Pearl to the scaffold. Chillingworth made a desperate attempt to snatch Dimmesdale back. The latter confessed his guilt and the crowd

beheld the minister, leaning on Hester's shoulder, and supported by her arm around him, approach the scaffold, and ascend its steps; while still the little hand of the sin-born child was clasped in his. Old Roger Chillingworth followed, as one intimately connected with the drama of guilt and sorrow in which they had all been actors, and well entitled, therefore, to be present, at its closing scene.

These three scaffold scenes are interspersed with two scenes in which Hester and Chillingworth appeared alone. In the first Chillingworth exacted from Hester the promise that she would not reveal his identity. In the second Hester, realizing the effect he was having upon the minister, approached him in the woods to release herself from her promise to keep Chillingworth's identity secret.

This framework used by Hawthorne gave a poise to The Scarlet Letter which was typical of his life. This poise or balance in his style was there but the reader was not conscious of the framework but of a unified impression of the

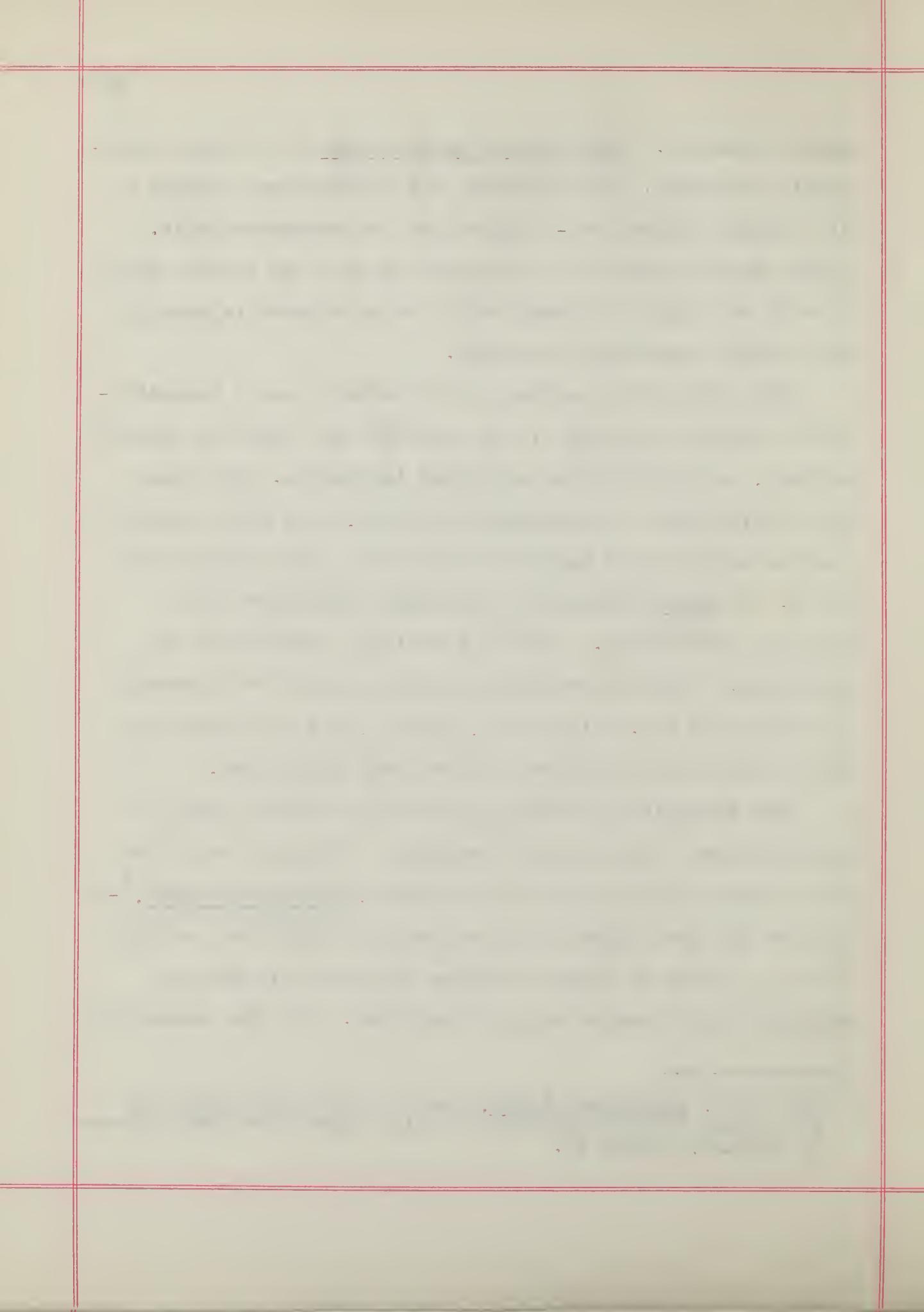


whole structure. The House of Seven Gables is likewise structurally balanced. Here Hepzibah and Clifford were offset by the younger generation -- Phoebe and the daguerreotypist. Judge Pyncheon supplied a personification of an outside force of evil not fully developed until the revelation is made in the chapter describing his death.

This structural perfection of Hawthorne was a characteristic foreign to Melville. His emphasis was upon the thought content, not upon gaining a unified impression. His books were filled with a cataloguing of events, in a true realistic fashion mingled with sporadic flights into the metaphysical realm. In Mardi Babbalanja represented earthiness and a practical philosophy. Yillah personified etherealism and mysticism. Melville could have combined these two elements in a balanced way. His choice, however, was to express an idea rather than to arrive at structural perfection.

The symbolism of either of these two authors would be worth serious discussion and treatment. This has been done to an extent by Culr Vega in her thesis, Pasteboard Masks,⁷ -- Fact as Spiritual Symbol in the Novels of Hawthorne and Melville. A study of either of these men and their use of symbolism could assume major proportions. For the purpose of

⁷ Culr Vega, Pasteboard Masks, Fact as Spiritual Symbol in the Novels of Hawthorne and Melville (Radcliffe Honor Thesis in English, Number 2).



this discussion only a comparison of the use of the symbolism of the two men will be treated.

The symbolism of Melville might be said to be his weakness, with the magnificent exception of Moby Dick. Hawthorne's strength was his use of symbolish. With him it strengthened fact and gave it a deeper significance. The scarlet letter "A" upon Hester's breast, embroidered so lavishly, revealed to the eye the girl's sin. More than that it signified the desperate and sacrificing struggle that seethed within her. Another potent symbol in The Scarlet Letter was the wild rose-bush described below.

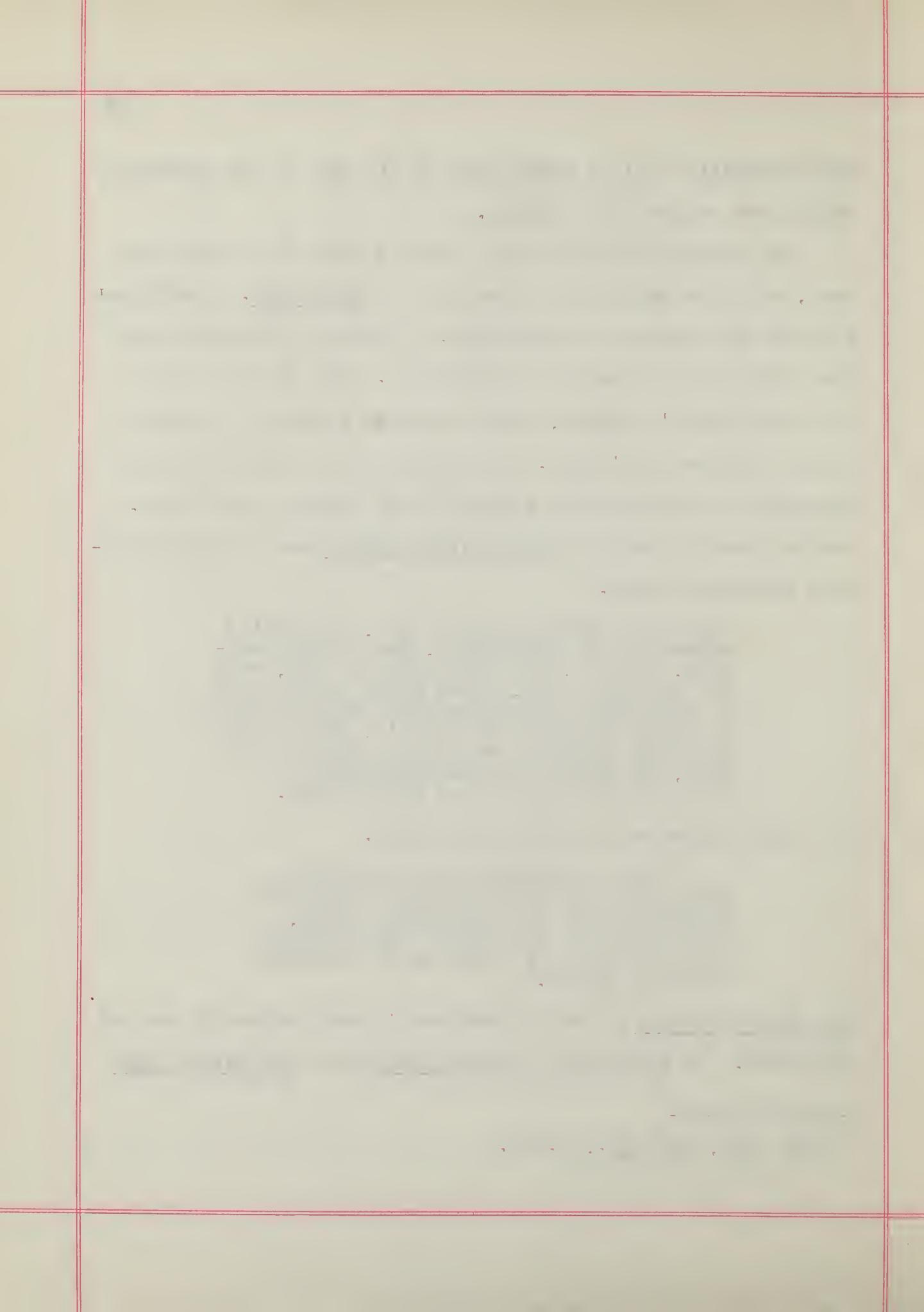
But on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshhold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.

Curl Vega expressed it with these words.

This is precisely what Hawthorne does with his symbolish; by it he gives tangibility to his intangible ideas, and brings out in clearer relief those elements of his stories which interest him most deeply.⁸

The Scarlet Letter revealed Hawthorne's most masterful use of symbolish. In The House of Seven Gables and The Marble Faun

⁸ Curl Vega, op. cit., p. 41.



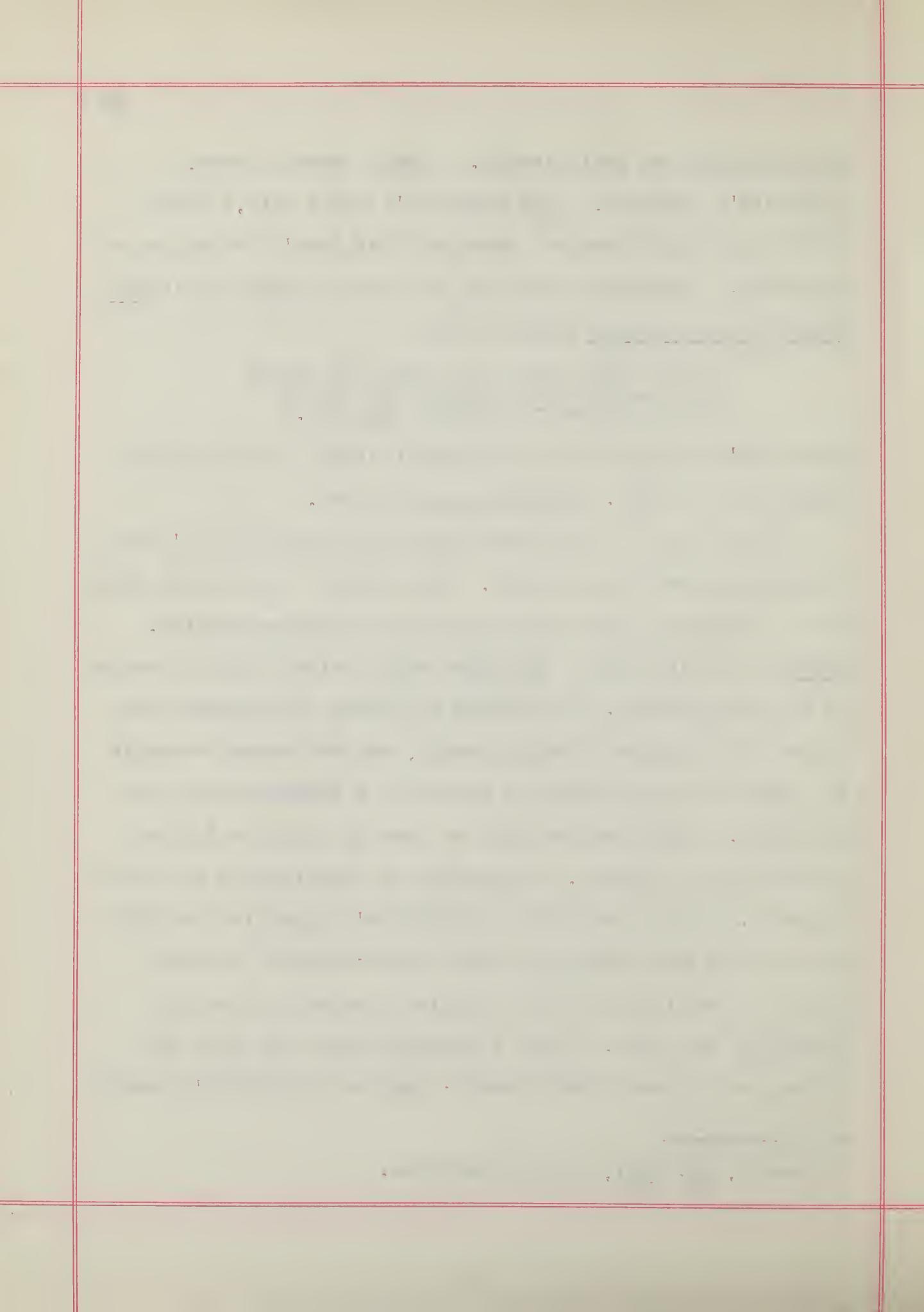
he used symbolism artistically. "Young Goodman Brown," "Rappacini's Daughter," "The Minister's Black Veil," "Ethan Brand" and "The Birthmark" revealed Hawthorne's better use of symbolism. Hawthorne summarized his use of symbolism in The House of Seven Gables saying it has

a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex.⁹

Hawthorne's symbolism was the characteristic of his writing which made it great. Symbolism was his art.

It was said in a previous paragraph that Melville's use of symbolism was his weakness. His symbolic conceptions often are not grasped by the reader even upon repeated reading. Mardi was filled with a symbolism which delved into the realm of the metaphysical. The search for Yillah represented the search for happiness clearly enough, but the mental vagaries one must go through never to arrive is a frustrated use of symbolism. Symbolism and fact as used by Melville did not complement one another. The thread of relationship was often obscured. Another weakness of Melville's symbolism was that it had no direct connection with a plot; much of it was a flight of imagination which deviated absolutely from the thread of the story. These digressions were not even the outcome of character development; they were Melville's mental

⁹ Stewart, op. cit., citing Hawthorne.



wanderings. His characters developed not from situations they found themselves in; they were puppets carrying out Melville's whims.

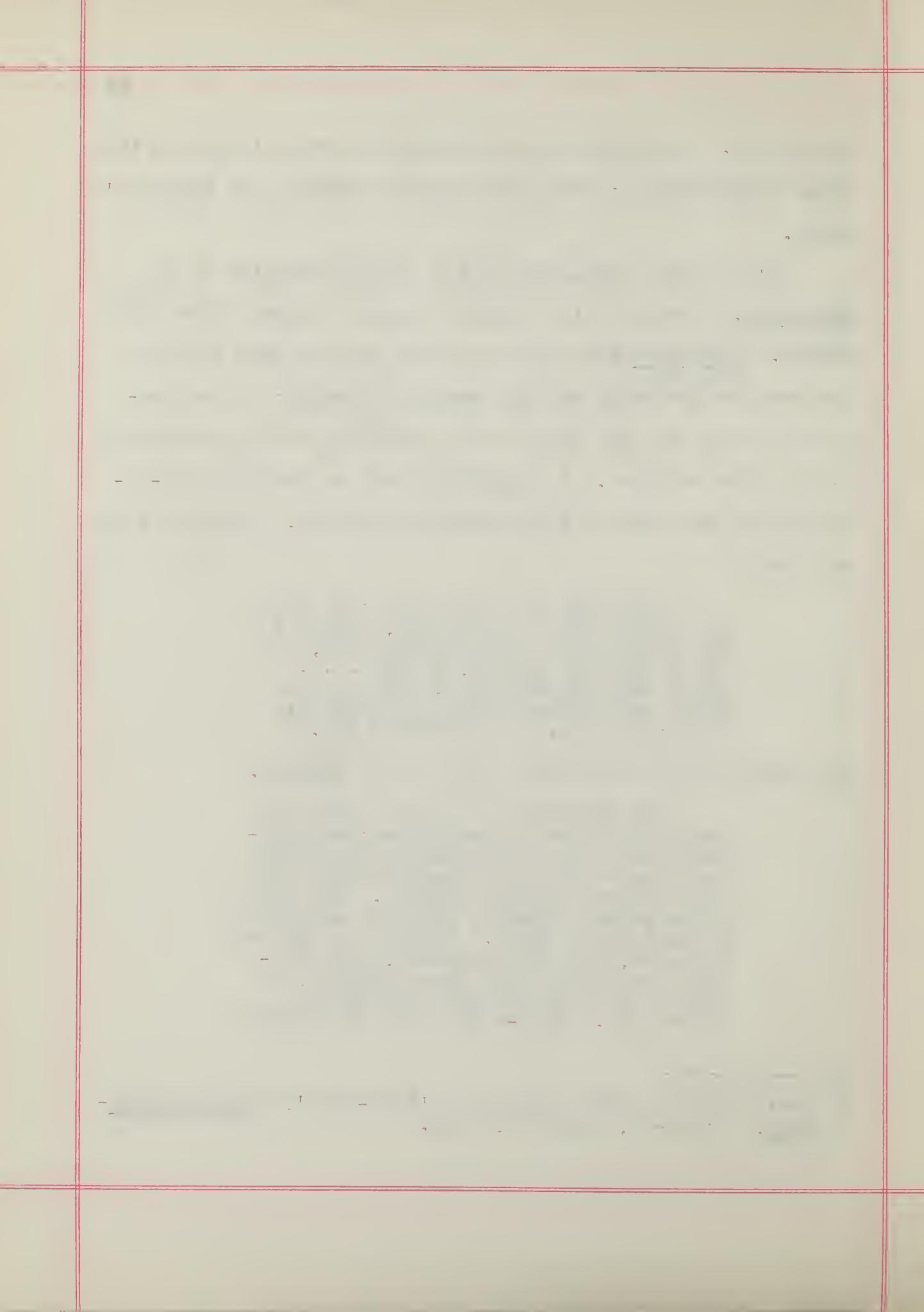
All of these weaknesses may be taken exception to in Moby Dick. Here Melville struck a balance between fact and symbol. Moby Dick was realism to the one who read it as a textbook on the whale and the whaling industry; it was symbolism to the one who read it as a treatise on the problem of evil in the universe. Its symbolism was as deep and all-embracing as the mind of the person who read it. Melville himself said

Two books are being writ; of which
the world will only see one, and that
the bungled one. The larger book, and
the infinitely better, is for . . .
(his) own private shelf. That it is
whose unfathomable cravings drunk his
blood: the other only demands ink.¹⁰

What Melville did was aptly summed up by Mumford.

But Melville is neither Flask nor Ahab nor artist nor scientist: he philosophizes out of a completer experience and a more coherent consciousness than any of these partial figures. The whole is no phantom symbol; and this stage is no pasteboard stage. If this is not the universe, the full universe, that Melville embodies under these symbols, no one in our time has had inklings of a fuller one. Moby-Dick is an imaginative

¹⁰ Lewis Mumford, "The Writing of 'Moby-Dick,'" American Mercury, 15:482-90, December, 1928.

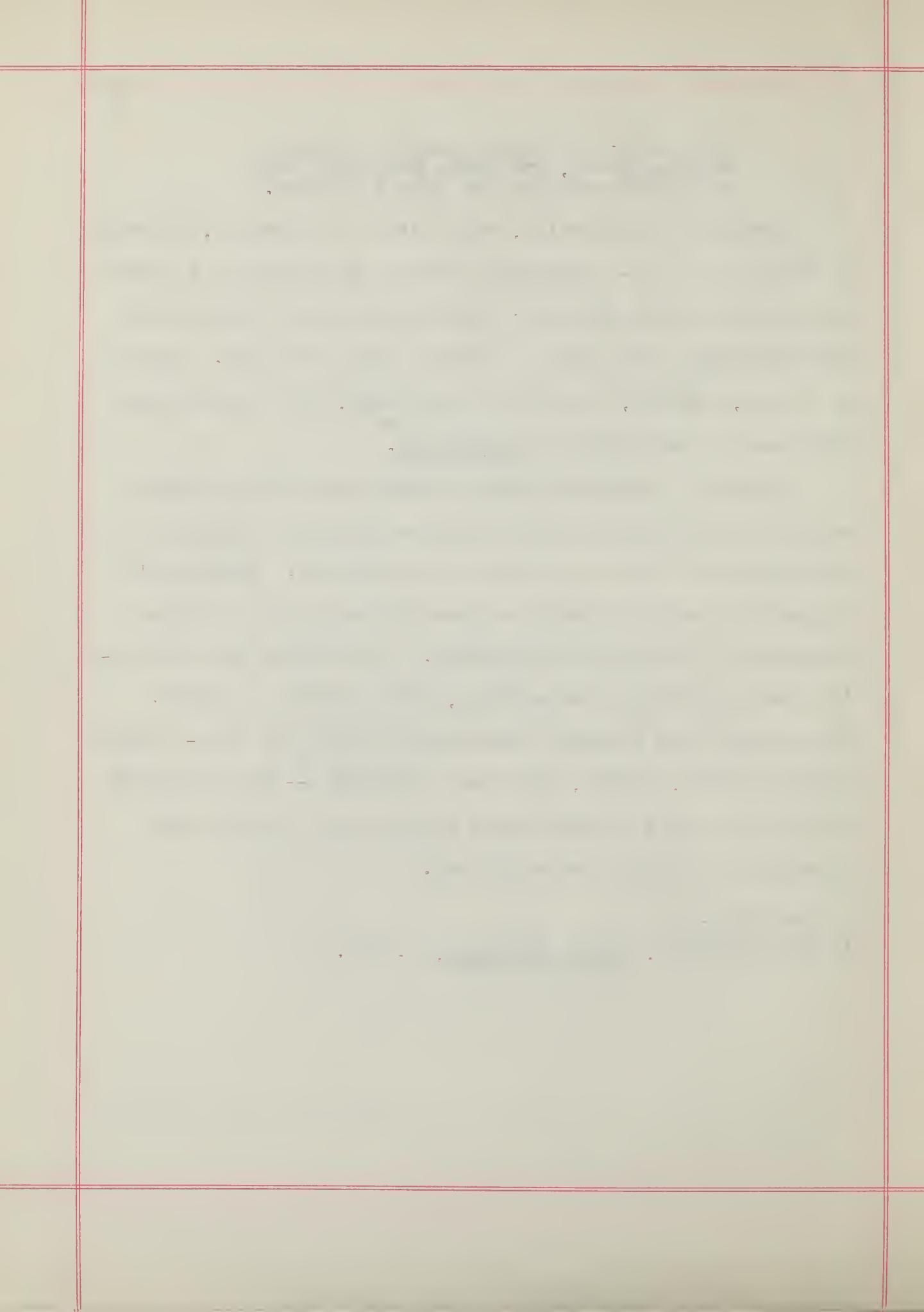


synthesis; and every aspect of reality belongs to it, one plane modifying the other and creating the modelled whole.¹¹

Hawthorne and Melville, both users of symbolism, differed in their use of it. Hawthorne with his symbolism as a device made the fact more concrete; Melville using the same device made the facts look hazy or distorted them entirely. Praises be to him, however, for all his vagueness, if it could bring forth such a masterpiece as Moby Dick.

A general impression from a comparison of the two men would be that Melville had an idea to express of which his characters were but the vehicle of expression. Hawthorne's characters spoke the truth or preached an idea as a direct outgrowth of their own development. The outcome was the logical result of their own actions, not a tacked on result. This chapter has compared the writing of the two men -- their subject matter, method, style and symbolism -- the contrasts which can be said to have grown largely out of their contrasting yet similar personalities.

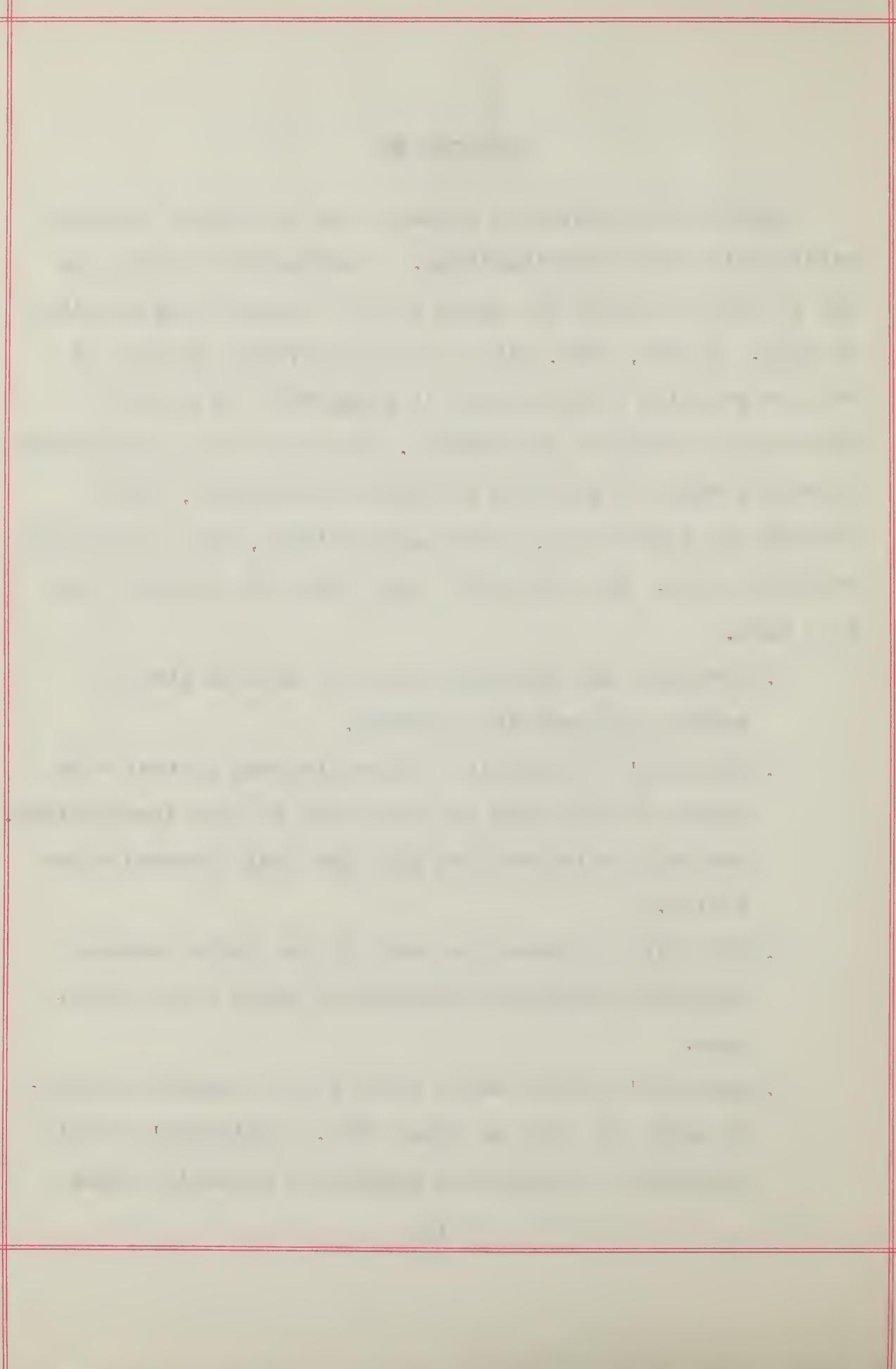
¹¹ Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, p. 171.



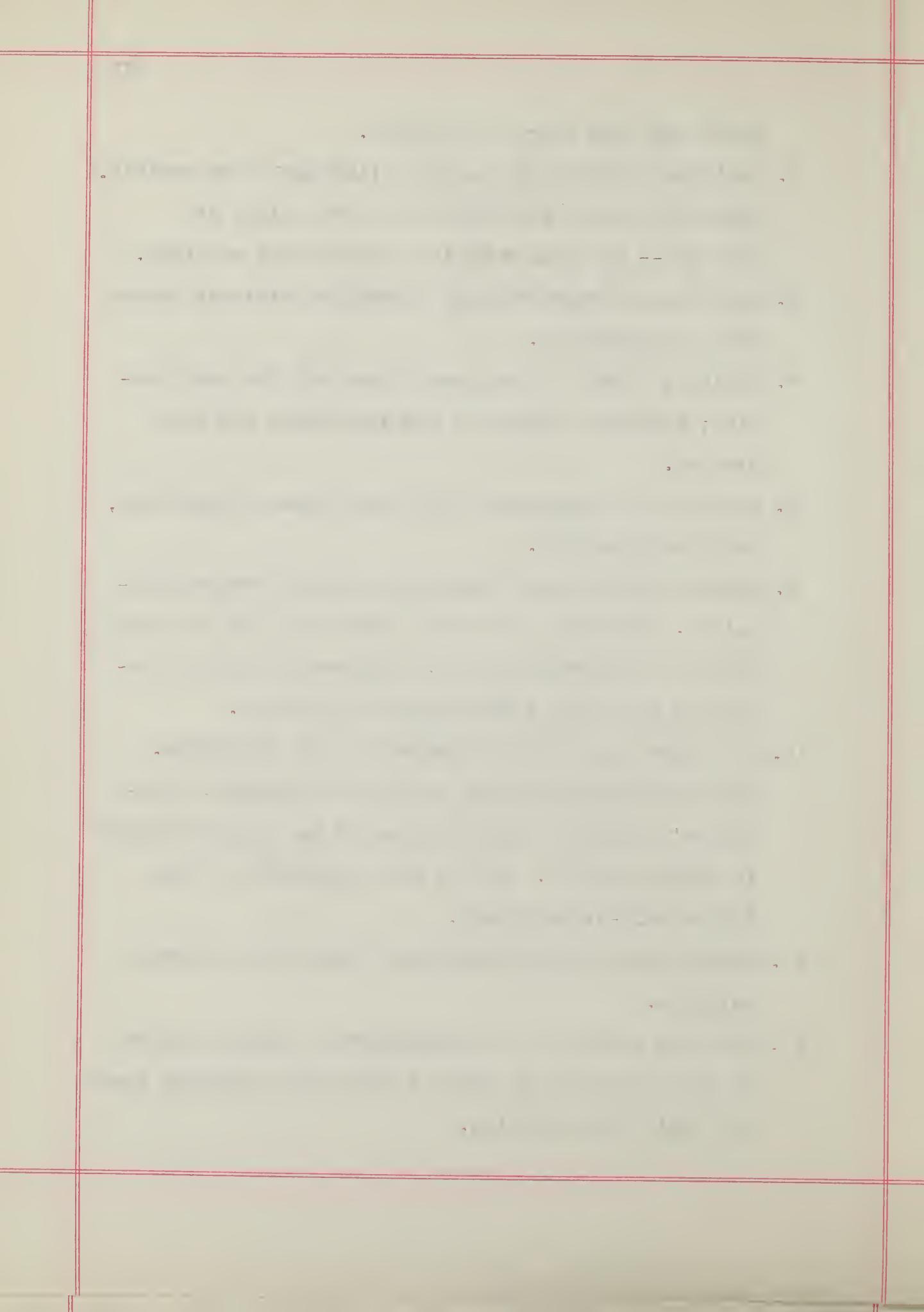
CONCLUSION

Melville and Hawthorne compared and contrasted revealed similarities and dissimilarities. A comparison has set one man in relief against the other giving a better understanding of each. It has, also, given a clearer picture of each of them in relation to the period in which they lived and of their relationship to one another. This has been accomplished through a study of heritage and early environment, their married and family life, their personalities, and a comparison of their works. The following comparison and contrasts have been made.

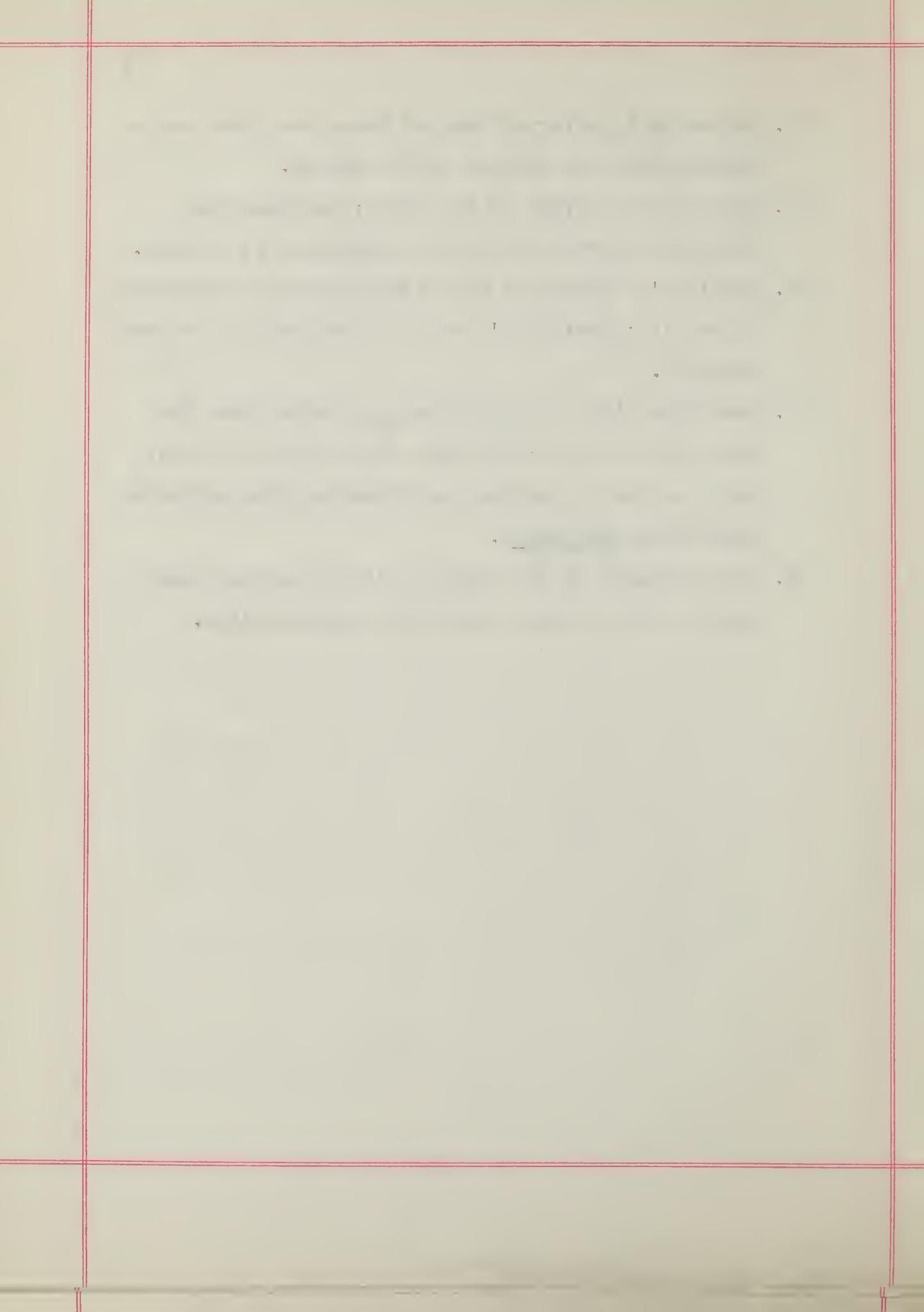
1. Hawthorne and Melville were both favored with a worthy and promising heritage.
2. Melville's preparation for writing was contact with people of all kinds and with life of many descriptions. Hawthorne withdrew from life and "only dreamed about living."
3. Melville and Hawthorne both enjoyed their greatest periods of literary productivity after their marriages.
4. Melville's family was a drain on his creative energy; he wrote his best at great odds. Hawthorne's family inspired his genius and supplied a steady force



- which kept him alert to the best.
5. Solitude to Hawthorne meant a withdrawal from society. Melville enjoyed solitude even in the midst of throngs -- he could draw into himself and be alone.
 6. Melville and Hawthorne had a detached attitude toward their surroundings.
 7. Melville looked at the mass of men and its civilization; Hawthorne looked at the individual and his problem.
 8. Melville and Hawthorne both looked clear through man, piercing hypocrisy.
 9. Neither Melville nor Hawthorne accepted transcendentalism. Melville had rather direct his own life than to have it charted for him. Hawthorne held to a belief in sin which transcendentalism denied.
 10. In a sense Melville and Hawthorne were fatalists. Melville felt man had no part in his destiny. Hawthorne's fatalism took the form of the Puritan belief in predestination. He was ever optimistic of the future well-being of man.
 11. Neither Melville nor Hawthorne took part in formal religion.
 12. Both men wanted to be independent of public opinion in their writing and both of them were dependent upon the public for a living.



13. The subject matter of each of these novelists had a locale which was typical of its author.
14. Melville was lavish in his style; Hawthorne was frugal and economical in his expression of an idea.
15. Melville's characters were the vehicles of expression of an idea; Hawthorne's were the outgrowth of a soul struggle.
16. Hawthorne with his symbolism as a device made the fact more concrete; Melville using the same device made the facts look hazy or distorted them entirely (excepting Moby Dick).
17. The contrasts in the writings of the two men grew largely out of their individual personalities.



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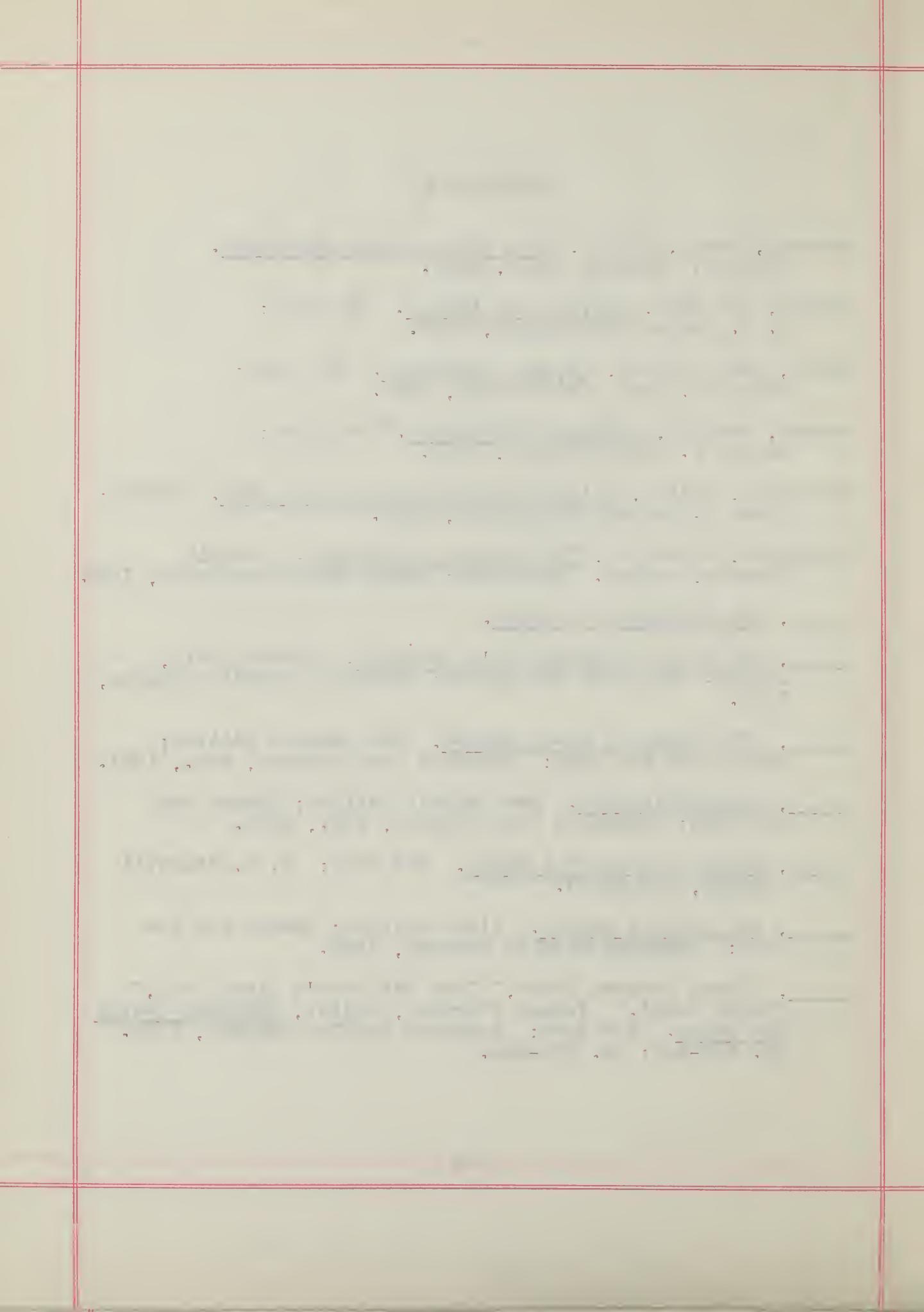
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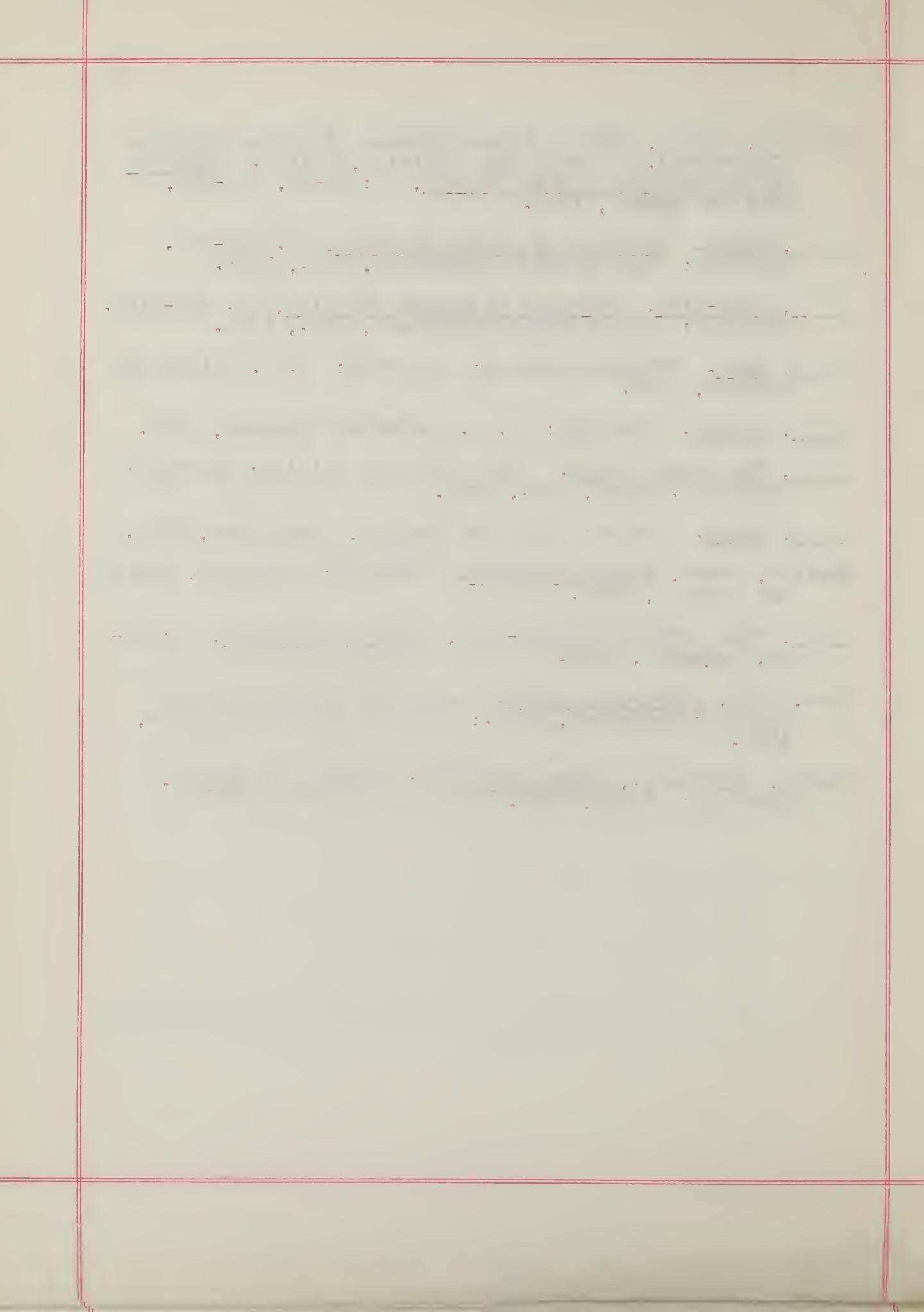
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ABSTRACT

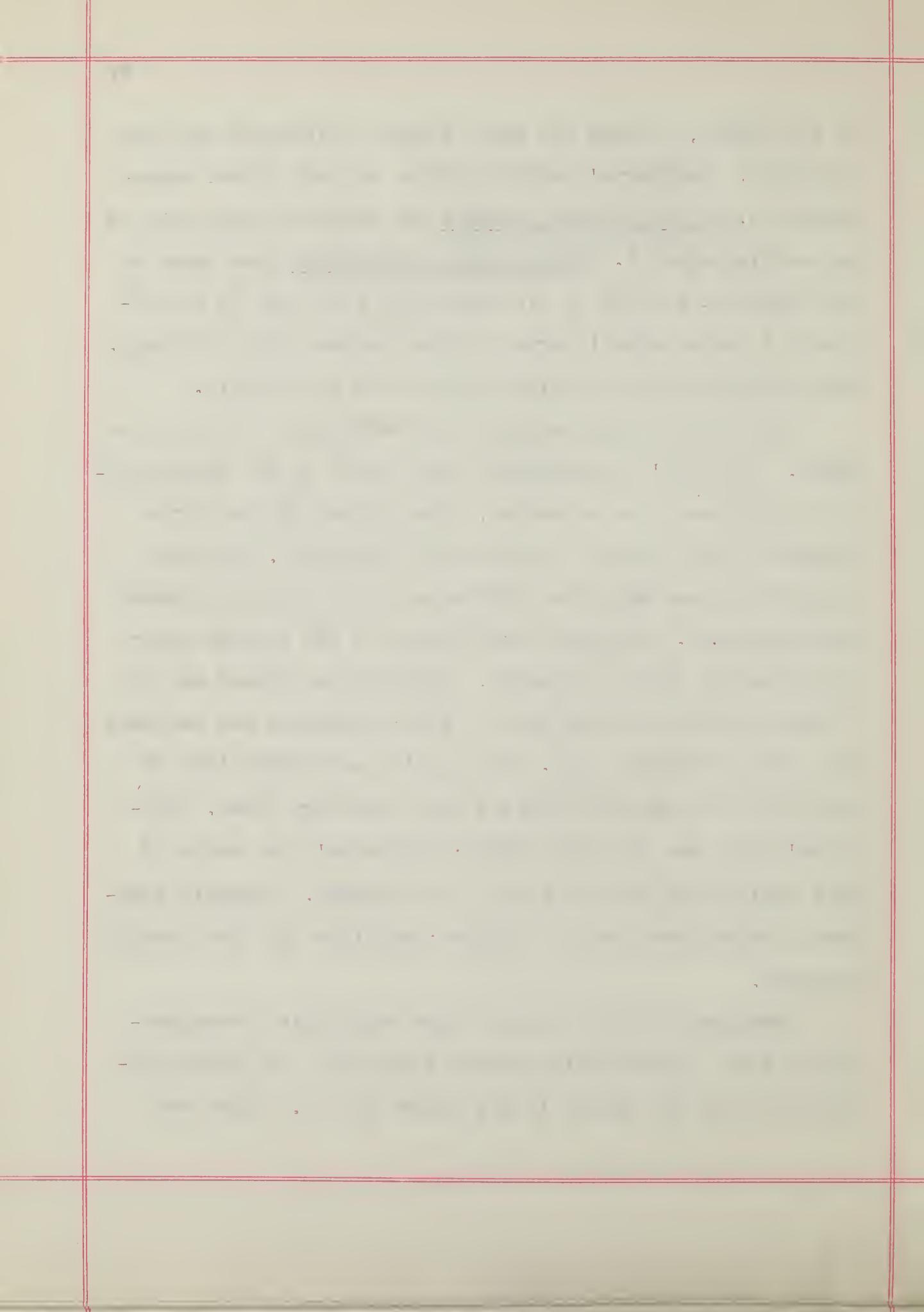
A comparison of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne was attempted in order to gain a better understanding of the individual men, to show their relationship to the period in which they lived, and their relation to one another. On surface inspection Melville and Hawthorne appear to be men who contrast greatly, but they were alike in their purpose to expose the shams of civilization. These men attacked hypocrisy each from his own point of view. Melville looked at the broader significance of social evils; Hawthorne observed the evil in the individual. Melville and Hawthorne are two enigmatical personalities each of whom contributed a masterpiece to nineteenth century literature.

The source material for this treatment was gained from both original and secondary sources. It was of two natures -- 1. biographical and autobiographical (the latter includes letters and journals); 2. the fictional writing of the two men. In the latter the question as to how much autobiography there is in novels arises. Melville projects his personality so far into his novels that he sacrifices art to the promulgation of his theories. This is true of Mardi and Pierre in particular. Moby Dick contains a restraint of the personality

of its author, so that the whole effect is balanced and proportional. Hawthorne's works admit of no such direct interpretation. The Blithedale Romance has popularly been held up as autobiographical. Mosses from an Old Manse does savor of the ideas and beliefs of its author but even here it is difficult to know where to draw the line between fact and fancy. Reasonableness and conservatism have been the formula.

Both Melville and Hawthorne had heritages of which to be proud. Melville's grandfathers both fought in the Revolutionary War and were men of action. The Puritan strain in the Hawthorne family cast its shadow over Nathaniel. He never completely broke away from Puritanism even though he exposed its weaknesses. The early environment of the two men under consideration differed greatly. Melville was forced out at a tender age to see life face to face; Hawthorne was secluded and lived a solitary life. The married and family life of Melville and Hawthorne affected their literary lives. Melville's wife was intensely loyal; Hawthorne's was aware of what would bring out the best in her husband. Economic problems harassed both men to a degree; Melville felt the greater pressure.

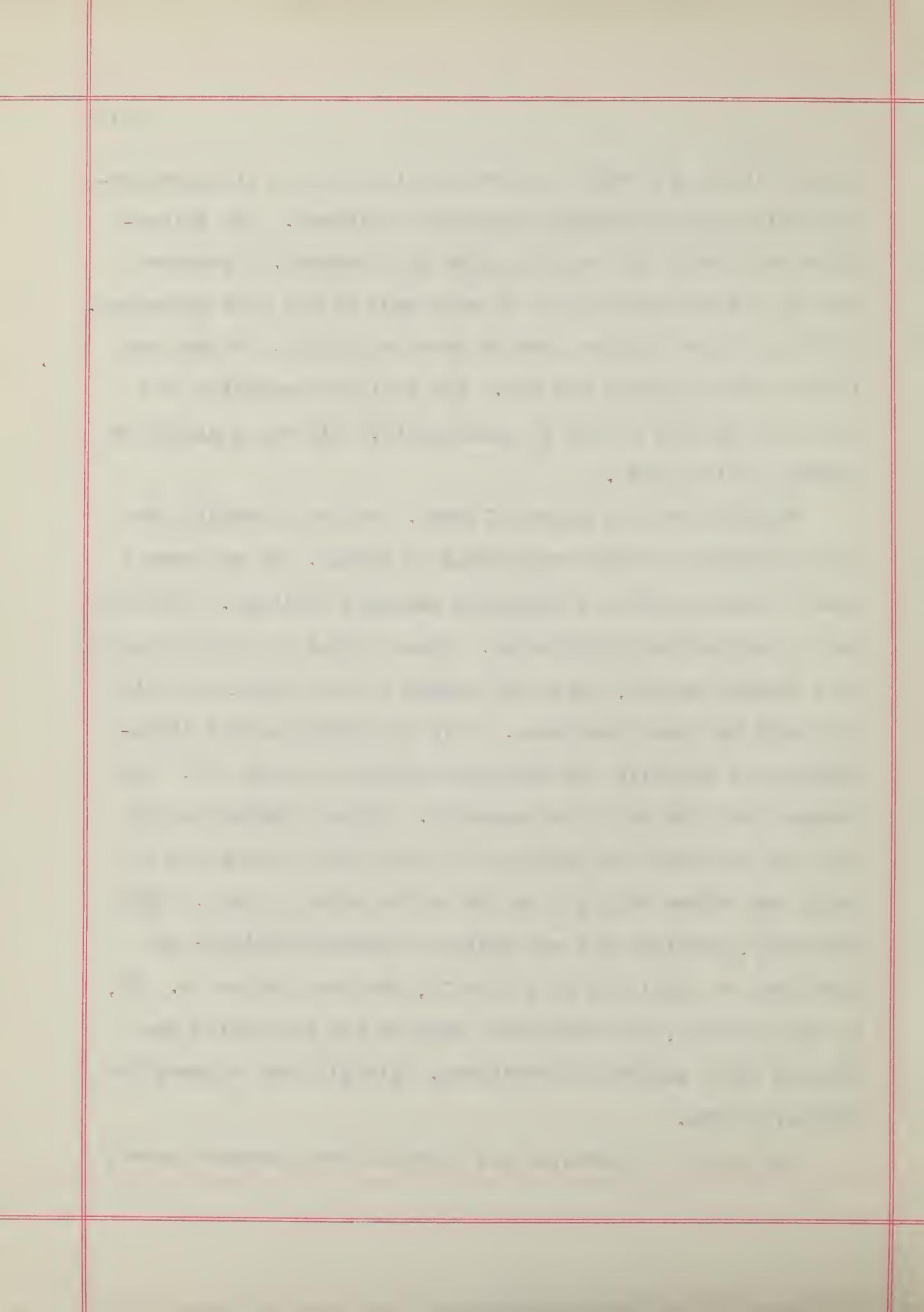
Hawthorne the man revealed some outstanding characteristics which contrast with those of Melville. He liked solitude but was not morbid in his desire for it. There was



certain indication that he showed an interest in his surroundings but it was a detached impersonal interest. His friendships which were few were the kind that endured. Hawthorne was not a transcendentalist as were many of his contemporaries. He still cleaved to the Puritan doctrine of sin. Formal religion held no appeal for him. His religion consisted of a belief in God and a form of immortality. Sin was punished by remorse in this life.

Melville the man liked solitude. He had a faculty for being alone even though surrounded by people. He was ever a passive observer with a decidedly detached attitude. Melville had no outstanding friendships. There seemed no one who could be a kindred spirit, share the depths of his personality with him until he found Hawthorne. This friendship proved disappointing to Melville for Hawthorne refused to thaw out. Two reasons for this might be suggested. Perhaps Hawthorne did not care to share the depths of his soul with another or he could not follow Melville to the depths which he went. Like Hawthorne, Melville did not embrace transcendentalism; he preferred to pilot his ship himself, not have God do it. He, on the contrary, was fatalistic when he saw frustrated man groping for a meaning to existence. His life was a quest for ultimate truth.

The works of Hawthorne and Melville when compared reveal



some of the same characteristics as the personalities of the men do. The locale of their novels was typical of their lives -- Melville used the sea and ships, Hawthorne used New England life. Hawthorne used economy and restraint in his choice of words; Melville used words lavishly. Character study was stressed by Hawthorne. Melville expressed ideas and his characters were vehicles of expression of these ideas. Both men used symbolism. It was Hawthorne's strength. He used it to bring his characters into stronger relief against their background. Melville with his symbolism made his character and stories hazy. Moby Dick was a glorious exception; its symbolism was used artistically.

Melville and Hawthorne were both out of joint with the period in which they lived. Melville saw through the false standards of conventional society and attacked mankind in general. Hawthorne looked at individuals and the growth of their souls. To him sin was the paramount evil to man. Both men withdrew from people and lived in their imaginations. The differences in their writings were a direct outgrowth of the differences in their personalities.

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